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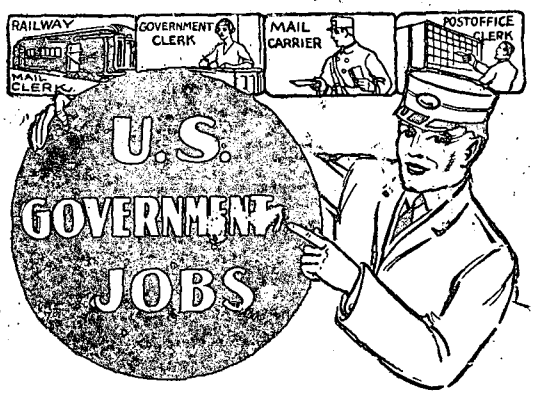

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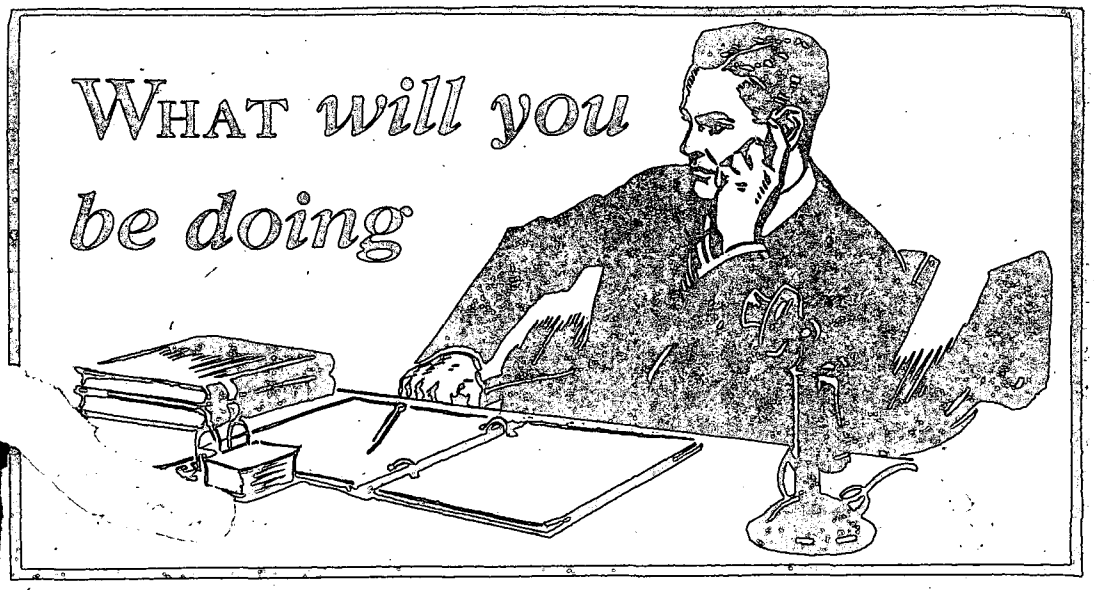

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One year from today will you still be putting off your start toward success—thrilled with ambition one moment and then cold the next—delaying, waiting, fiddling away the precious hours that will never come again?

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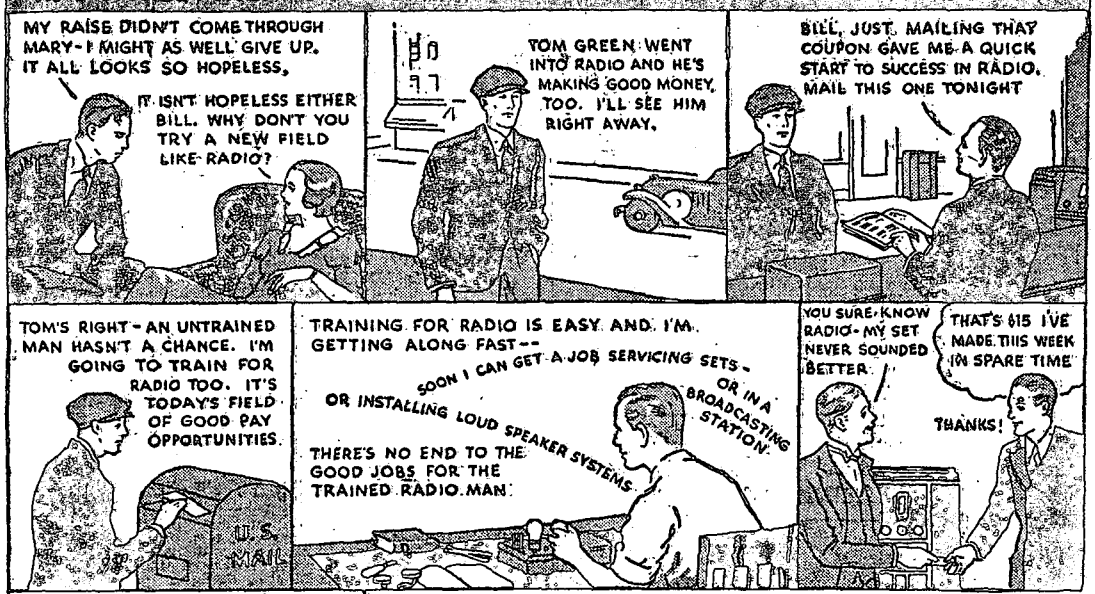
HE THOUGHT HE WAS LICKED—THEN A TIP GOT BILL A GOOD JOB!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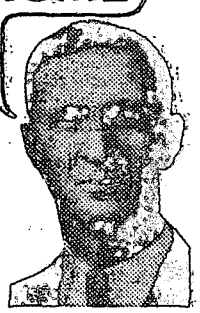

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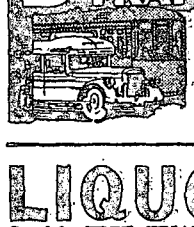

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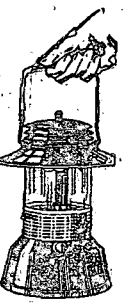

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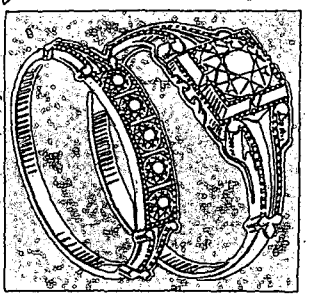

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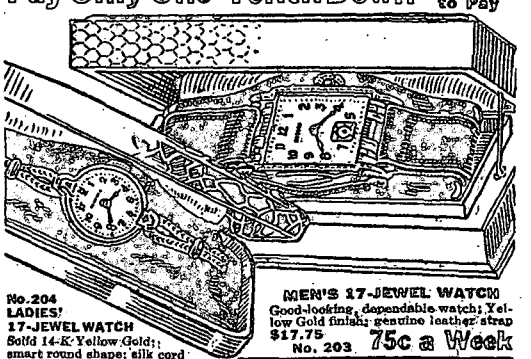

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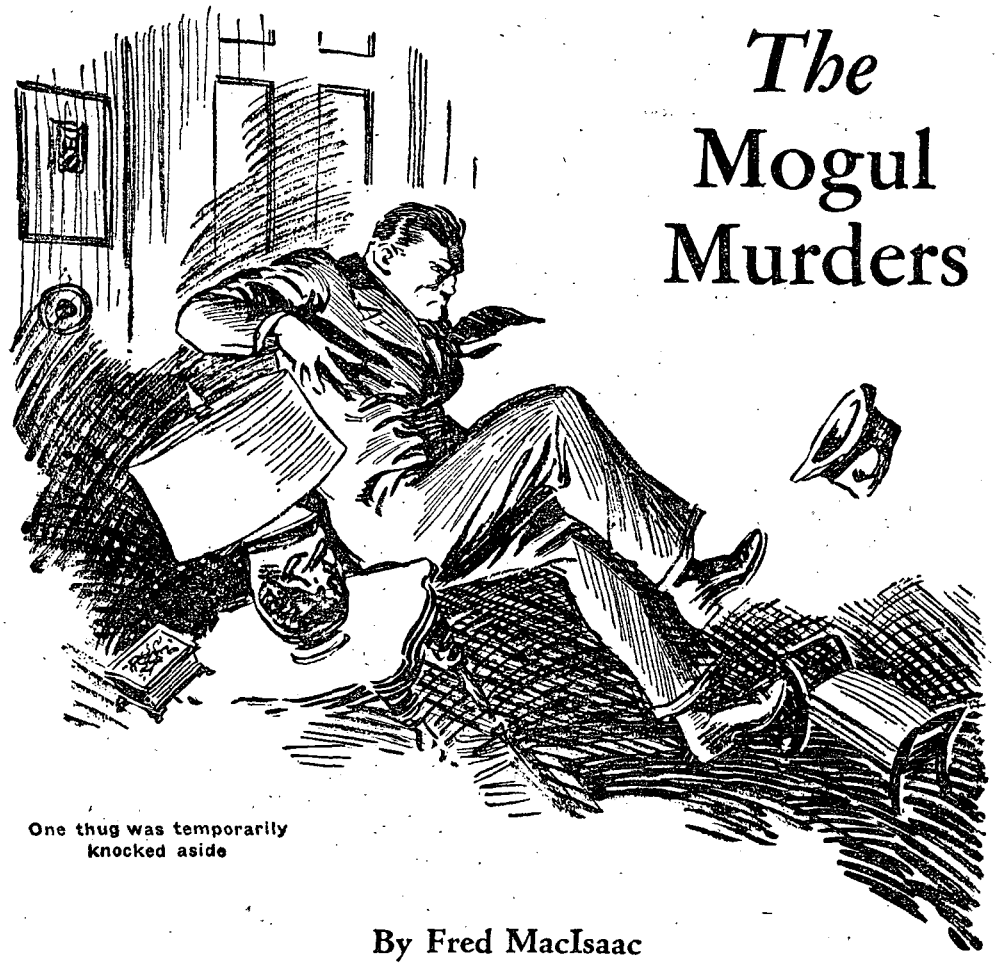
The Mogul Murders



One thug was temporarily knocked aside

By Fred MacIsaac

CHAPTER I

Murder in a Soundproof Room

MR. HARLEIGH PORTER, President of the Porter Supersteel Corporation and director in a dozen banks and industrial concerns, was talking into the telephone while his secretary waited with a notebook on her lap. She was tapping idly with the pencil in her right hand against the back of her left hand until her employer was ready to resume dictating.

A small dark girl with a thick mass of lustrous black hair cut short, she had small straight features and large very bright black eyes. She had been a working girl for two years, earned forty dollars a week and wouldn't have been Mr. Porter's secretary if she were not a very competent stenographer.

"Come on down, right away," said Mr. Porter savagely. "Let's get this over with as soon as possible. I've stood for your damn nonsense long enough." He hung up the phone with a bang.

"When my nephew gets here, send him right in," he said to his secretary. He called his nephew a bad name under his breath and thumped his desk with his right fist. Then he picked

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Frank defended himself as best he knew how

up the letter to which he had been dictating, a reply when interrupted. At the end of five minutes he dismissed the girl who returned to her desk in the outer office.

It was a very large office full of young men and young women. They were auditors and filing clerks and bookkeepers and typists—the sort of staff to be found in the head office of a corporation with plants scattered all over the east.

Miss Platt—the secretary's name was Annabel Platt—phoned the company operator sitting at her switchboard sixty feet away and close to the private elevator of Harleigh Porter.

"Mr. Owen Porter, Mr. Porter's nephew, will be here shortly," she said. "He is to be sent right in to Mr. Porter's office."

She began to transcribe her notes but glanced up as the young man

All New York Believed That Owen Porter Had Committed Murder. But His Best Friend, Frank Westerly, Had Faith in Him, and Fought Against Conspiracy in High Places to Save an Innocent Man from Death in the Electric Chair

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passed her desk ten minutes later.

"Anybody with him?" he inquired.

"No, you're to go right in.

Miss Platt hadn't seen young Mr. Porter for nearly two years. Two years ago she had been in the ruck of stenographers employed by the company; merit not yet having made itself felt. One of the older girls had pointed him out.

"Sailing for Europe tomorrow, the lucky stiff," she said. "Never did a stroke of work in his life, but gets all the best of it. Wonder how he'd like to live on twenty dollars a week."

Annabel had glanced at the youth who was waiting until his uncle had disposed of a business visitor. He was tall, broad-shouldered, blond and prepossessing.

"He wouldn't care for it," she told the other girl. Annabel knew. Until recently she had never worked and never expected to. She began at twenty dollars a week and hadn't learned yet how to live on such a small sum.

Well, after loafing in Europe for nearly two years, young Porter was back, and about to get a tongue lashing from his uncle. Meanwhile Annabel had risen in the business world to a position which, for a girl, was important. She had learned what a dollar will purchase if carefully expended and was very comfortable on her forty dollars a week. She was so comfortable that she had turned down two proposals of marriage from excellent prospects, because she didn't happen to be thrilled by the gentlemen. Recently, however, she had met a man who was "different."

Being a girl she was curious. She wondered just what the likable young man had done to get himself in wrong. Her chair was backed up against the partition of the President's office and she might have heard voices inside except that Mr. Porter had had his office sound-proofed.

Conferences were held in there and deals were made in which millions were involved, so Mr. Porter had taken precautions to prevent employees from hearing things that they were not intended to hear.

AFTER five minutes, Owen Porter came out, passed her desk swiftly and crossed the office and rang for the elevator. She didn't see his face but the set of his shoulders were jaunty. Apparently the wigging he had received had not depressed him. After all, as she knew very well, old Harleigh Porter's bark was worse than his bite. The boy, probably, had gone off with a big check in his pocket.

She glanced at the clock before again bending her lovely head over her typewriter. It was five minutes after three.

Some time later her phone rang. It was the operator.

"I can't get Mr. Porter to answer his phone," she complained. "And there have been several important calls for him."

"I'll step in," said the Secretary. She giggled. "Maybe he has fallen asleep again."

Mr. Porter, like most great executives, arranged things so that as few visitors as possible and as little detail as possible came to his desk. In newspaper accounts of the great man, it was always stressed that he arrived at his office every morning at one minute to nine and did not leave until five-thirty exactly; that he had not taken a vacation for twenty years and, in that time, had not missed a single business day.

Although this was absolutely true, Miss Platt knew that Mr. Porter did

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not work hard. While he made decisions of tremendous business importance, his day's work could be lumped in about sixty minutes elapsed time.

There was a huge leather couch in his magnificently furnished office and Mr. Porter did more thinking stretched out on it than seated in his swivel chair. And Annabel knew that, when he was supposed to be thinking, he was often snoring.

However, the old gentleman was sixty-five, a hearty eater and the proprietor of one of the finest paunches in New York. He was also the owner of a high blood pressure and probably had other things the matter with him. He had begun working, as he loved to tell, at the age of fourteen, as an errand [illegible] a mill office in Pittsburgh. He had built up a great fortune and, if he slept more than he worked during business hours, it was nobody's business.

She tapped gently on his door, then pressed the buzzer, realizing that he couldn't hear a knock because of the soundproofing. When the buzzer got no response, she opened the door and peered in.

Mr. Porter wasn't there. She had a clear view of his couch and his desk. Well, there was an exit through a closet into the corridor and every now and then Mr. Porter left that way, lest the tension of the office relax from the knowledge that the Old Boy wasn't in there on the job.

She walked into the room. And then Annabel's eyes became glassy. She turned pale and pressed both hands to her breast. She saw him. He was laying on the floor behind his desk, on his back. Apoplexy?

She moved timidly nearer. Her mouth opened, but no sound came out. She swayed upon her heels.

In the middle of the forehead of Mr. Porter was a small round hole from which was oozing a thin rivulet of blood which smeared the left side of his face.

Annabel, white as a ghost, backed out of the room. She closed the door. She slid into her chair and buried her face in her hands. Mr. Porter had been murdered—shot in the forehead.

There was no strength in her legs, it seemed. What should she do? Call the police, of course. No, tell Mr. Gammon first. She rose and walked shakily across the open office to the private office of John Gammon, the first vice-president. She knocked on his door and a harsh voice called "Come in."

Mr. Gammon was a different type from Harleigh Porter. He had begun life as a puddler in a steel works in Pittsburgh. He had a huge head with heavy ill-shaped features. His chin was like a promontory. His shoulders were enormous. His eyes were small, blue and hard. He had a big mouth and thick lips and the expression of the mouth was always ill-natured.

He was a big two-fisted bohunk with brains. During Harleigh Porter's climb to eminence, Mr. Gammon was reputed to have done the dirty work and, in big business of a decade or two past, dirty work was plentiful.

He was also said to be Mr. Porter's backbone. Annabel knew that he was a very able man and she hated the sight of him. If she had been assigned to him as secretary, she would have poisoned herself, or, anyway, thrown up her job.

"Well," he said in his customary gruff manner, "what the devil do you want? Say, child, what's the matter with you?"

For Annabel stood inside the door

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swaying—cold sweat was breaking out on her forehead.

CHAPTER II

The Office Ogre

THE big man leaped to his feet, caught Miss Platt as she was about to collapse and set her down in an overstuffed leather chair. There was no couch in his office.

"Faint and have it over with," he said harshly.

Annabel rallied. "I won't," she promised. "I'll be all right, sir."

"Well, what's the matter with you?"

"Mr. Porter. He's been shot. He's on the floor in his office." And then Annabel really fainted.

Gammon rushed to the door. "Miss Price," he bellowed. His secretary bounced out of her chair, collided with her desk and approached him looking terrified.

"Do something for Miss Platt. Gone crazy, I guess," he growled.

He then crossed the office with measured tread.

"Big gorilla," muttered one small meek stenographer to another.

Gammon entered the President's office and closed the door. He muttered something as he spied the heavy figure on the floor. He knelt beside Porter and felt of his heart, though it was obvious that the man was dead. He then lifted him with ease, despite his weight, and placed him on the couch. He stood looking down at him with an inscrutable expression.

"So this is what we're all coming to," he said aloud.

He crossed the room and stood in front of the big window which looked upon the sublime spectacle of New York Bay. A great stream-lined ship was moving slowly up the harbor, thick black smoke coming out of her great funnels.

"That's the Normandie," he muttered. "How many years before she goes to the scrap-heap?"

He then crossed to the desk and picked up the telephone. "Call the Commissioner of Police," he commanded. "I'll talk to no one else."

In a couple of minutes the call was put through.

"Sturgis," he said thickly. "Harleigh Porter has been murdered in his office. Shot in the forehead just above the eyes. No, I don't know who did it."

"Don't touch anything. I'll be over personally in a few minutes," declared the Commissioner.

"I've lifted him from the floor and laid him on the couch."

"Confound you, you should know better than touch the body."

"You go to the devil," snarled John Gammon.

The Commissioner laughed. "I know how you must feel, John," he said good naturedly. "Probably no harm done."

"You can the chatter and get over here with your experts," shouted Gammon and hung up.

Police Commissioner John Sturgis was an aristocrat and John Gammon was a roughneck but for some reason they were good friends and frequent golf partners.

Gammon left the private office. As he stepped outside, he became aware that the news was out. Work was suspended—everyone was talking excitedly. All eyes were turned to the burly figure which glowered at them from the doorway.

"Get to work," he snarled. "This is no affair of yours. This is a business office."

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"Why, the cold-blooded beast!" murmured the little steno who had referred to him as a gorilla a few moments before. "A murder in the office and he expects us to go on working."

"With him as the big boss, this place is certainly going to be hell," said the girl beside her.

GAMMON went into his own office and closed the door. Annabel Platt had recovered and she and Gammon's secretary were talking together excitedly. He jerked his thumb toward the door. "Get out," he commanded. "Not you, Miss Platt. I want to talk to you."

The other girl fled like a frightened fawn.

Gammon lowered above the girl in the big chair. "Able to answer questions?" he asked less harshly.

"Yes, sir."

"Who was his last visitor?"

"His nephew, Mr. Owen Porter, sir."

"Owen, eh? When did he leave?"

"At five minutes past three, Mr. Gammon."

"How come you discovered Harleigh?"

"Why, the operator called me to say that she wasn't able to get him on the phone so I looked in and saw—" She choked up.

"What time was that?"

"I think it was about twenty minutes past three."

"You saw Owen leave? Was he agitated, excited?"

"No, sir, he seemed quite cheerful."

"Put another girl on the switchboard and send that operator in here."

Annabel rose. "Wait," he demanded. "How long was Owen in his uncle's office?"

"Not more than a few minutes."

"All right. Send in the operator."

The girl left hastily. The man had no feelings, probably glad that he was going to step into the Presidency.

THE phone operator came in with the frightened manner with which all the females entered the tiger's lair. And her manner exasperated the big man. What the devil were they all afraid of him for? He had never bitten any of them.

"Who called Mr. Porter between three-five and three-twenty?" he shouted, pointing a big forefinger at her. The girl stood there, shaking, unable to reply.

"Come on, get your wits about you," he said more mildly. He even smiled, unaware that his big yellow teeth made his smile fearsome.

"Er—er—Mr. Blunt, the lawyer, and Mr. Felton of Gloria Steel and—and Mr. Owen Porter."

"Owen called back, after he left?" he exclaimed. "How long after?"

"Maybe ten minutes, sir."

"What time did you notify Miss Platt that Mr. Porter wasn't answering his phone?"

"I think it was about three-twenty. Usually I put his calls through to Miss Platt, but these were people who were friends, and his nephew who had just left him, so I rang his line directly."

"Send Miss Platt back here and go back on your job."

The speed at which she departed was ludicrous but he was in no mood to notice things like that.

Annabel returned reluctantly. "Miss Platt?" he demanded. "Know what Owen wanted of his uncle?"

"No, sir. He phoned Mr. Porter who told him to come right down."

"Were you in the private office at the time?"

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"Yes, sir."

"Did they seem to be on good terms—you heard the conversation?"

She swallowed hard. "Yes, sir," she said faintly. She didn't know why she lied.

"That's all. The police will be here directly. They'll want to question you. Happen to be acquainted with Owen?"

"I saw him pass through the office nearly two years ago before he went to Europe and this was the second time I've seen him."

"I asked if you were acquainted with him?" he demanded.

"No, sir. I've never exchanged a word with him except to tell him today he could go right into his uncle's office."

"Go back to your desk."

She hesitated. "I was thinking—couldn't the murderer have entered through that door from the corridor that leads into Mr. Porter's closet?"

"Possibly. That's all."

CHAPTER III

The Hunted Man

IT was ten P.M. of the evening of the second day after the murder of Harleigh Porter. A young man was sitting in a big chair under a reading lamp in the living room of a small walk-up apartment in East Fifty-sixth Street, New York. His long legs were elevated upon another chair. He was reading a book the title of which was *Doomed Men*.

The name of the author was Francis J. Westerly. It was not a coincidence that the reader's name was Francis J. Westerly. He was also the author. It was his first book and it was so far from being a best seller that the publishers had quit after printing a few thousand copies. Strangely enough, the movies had liked it and paid ten thousand dollars for it.

Westerly was a long-legged chap and long-faced. He was dark, usually in need of a haircut, with prominent rather attractive features, the best of which was a mouth that had a whimsical tilt to it. His eyes were humorous, too. Brown eyes that didn't smile; they grinned.

If he hadn't had a sense of humor the vicissitudes of life would have got him down. Four years in the Latin Quarter of Paris: Four years of hard work and little profit from the short stories he mailed to America plus the forty percent increase of the cost of living had driven him home like most of the Americans of the Latin Quarter.

And in his first year in New York he had written a book and sold the picture rights. When the check arrived in a few days, he and the delectable Annabel Platt, who lived in the walk-up directly below his, were going to dine and make a night of it. She had promised.

His doorbell rang so he rose and pressed the button which caused the front door to open and give somebody the privilege of climbing three flights of stairs. He didn't know who it was but he wouldn't mind talking to anybody, since Miss Platt was out filling an engagement this evening.

There were heavy steps on the stairs, a head hove in view as Westerly stood like a good host at the open door, and Frank Westerly's expression became one of concern. A large blonde young man arrived in the hallway. Frank stepped back and as the visitor entered he closed the door quickly.

"Ah," he said significantly, "the fugitive from justice."

The other man threw himself into the chair just vacated by Westerly.

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"Confound you, you think everything is funny," he complained. "You have to help me, Frank."

"Owen," said Westerly, who stood beside the chair and patted the fugitive on the shoulder, "you are in a devil of a fix."

"Do you think I killed my uncle?" demanded Owen Porter sharply.

Westerly sat down, produced a package of cigarettes and tossed them to the visitor. "No," he said. "As a writer of mystery fiction, I wouldn't cast you for a killer. How long do you expect to sneak around New York? The alarm is out for you, every cop has your description. Hadn't you better give yourself up?"

"Would you like to sit in the electric chair?" asked Porter angrily. "I'm practically convicted now. All they have to do is to lay hands on me. You have to help me to get out of town. I have no money."

"Making me an accessory after the fact—if it is a fact," said Westerly. "Naturally I've read all the accounts of the crime. You were the last person to enter your uncle's office. He was alive when you went in, dead a few minutes after you went out. The bullet was from a .32 caliber revolver. You own one. You vanish off the map. Practically a confession of guilt. You have a violent temper. Do I know! You were going to be disinherited for good reasons. You had the opportunity, the motive, the gun. Everything indicates that you murdered the old gentleman—so I believe you are innocent."

Owen's smile was moist and his eyes filled with tears. "You old cockroach," he said huskily.

"Unfortunately I have very little money, though in a few days I'll get ten thousand dollars, movie rights to my book. Have you read my book, by the way?"

"No—not yet."

"It will be nice to read in prison," said the Job's comforter. "And you can hide-out here till they catch you. Of course, I'll get a prison term for keeping you here, but I might write a great book in jail."

Owen half rose. "I didn't think of that. I was desperate—"

"Sit down, you ass," commanded Westerly. "After what we went through in Paris, don't you think I'd take a chance. I'll tell you, Owen, why I know you're innocent. If you wanted to kill your uncle you wouldn't be fool enough to walk into his office, after making an appointment, after having been recognized by everybody, and shoot him down. Besides you're a rotten marksman. You couldn't hit a man between the eyes. So, obviously, somebody got in there and killed him after you left."

"Frank," said Owen earnestly, "I never went to my uncle's office."

THE writer who had crossed his legs uncrossed them and jumped to his feet. "What are you talking about?" he demanded. "Of course you went there. You were identified."

"It wasn't me," he declared earnestly if without regard for grammar.

"Look here," said Frank impatiently. "The young lady whom I admire and who lives downstairs is Miss Platt, your uncle's secretary. She saw you, spoke to you and identifies you. Where do you think that story will get you?"

"I haven't been in my uncle's office for twenty-two months so this Miss Platt must have a good memory," declared Owen Porter.

"Then somebody impersonated

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you," observed Westerly sardonically. "In which case you have an alibi. If you weren't in your uncle's office, you were somewhere else. Where were you?"

Owen looked unhappy. "I can't prove an alibi. And nobody would believe my story."

"I'm a gullible soul," said Frank with a grin. "Tell me."

"All right. I went into my hotel bar for a cocktail the other afternoon about five-thirty. A girl took the next stool to mine at the bar. We got talking—what was the harm? She was good looking and funny. We swapped names. Hers was Opal Adams. I invited her to dinner but she had an engagement. I asked her for dinner the next night but she was dated up.

"'Tell you what,' she said. 'I have an apartment on East Fifty-fourth Street. It's a walk-up, but nice. If you'd like to come up about two-thirty tomorrow afternoon we'll sit and chat for an hour or so and then I'll have to put you out because my masseuse is coming.'

"That sounded cosy and I quite looked forward to it. I was there at two-thirty—sharp. I rang; she pressed the button and I walked up two flights. She admitted me and we sat down and had a nice hour. She made highballs. I hated to go at four o'clock, but she insisted. She agreed to go to dinner with me the next night. I thought she was a very fine girl and a good fellow."

"Meanwhile your uncle was being murdered. But you have an alibi."

"Wait, please. I rode uptown ten or twelve blocks, went into a couple of bars and about six o'clock dropped into a new restaurant on East 72nd Street for dinner.

"When I finished dinner, about seven-thirty, I left the place and almost bumped into a newsboy selling an extra. In big headlines I saw 'Harleigh Porter Shot to Death.'

"I bought a paper, read it and learned that I had called on my uncle and he was discovered murdered a few moments after I left. I had been positively identified by a secretary and a phone operator who couldn't have known me. This Miss Platt wasn't my uncle's secretary when I went abroad. I saw that the time of my visit was three-five. At three-five I was sitting in Miss Adams' apartment. I did some quick thinking.

"The police would nab me pretty soon. Miss Adams might be frightened at the publicity—for all I knew she might have a husband, though she claimed she was unmarried. I took a cab and drove back to her apartment. I wasn't much scared. I felt pretty bad about my uncle but I expected to have no trouble proving that I hadn't been to his office.

"I LEFT the cab at her apartment house. I rang her bell—apartment seven—no answer. I kept ringing and then I made a discovery. Her name had been removed from the name-slot over the bell button. Then I began to be worried. I rang the bell of number one apartment—the front door was ajar and a man opened the apartment door.

"'I'm looking for Miss Adams,' I said.

"He shook his head. 'Never heard of her.'

"'But she lives third floor front.'

"'That apartment has been empty for weeks. You've got the wrong house, mister.' He slammed the door. I went out and looked at the house number; it was the right house. What do you make of it, Frank?"

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"You've been framed," declared the writer of mystery stories.

"But why—I'm in a fog. Of course, after that, I lost my nerve. I didn't dare go to my hotel. The police would be waiting for me. I dared not risk giving myself up. Those people who claimed to recognize me might persist and what chance did I have? I had about twenty dollars in cash in my pocket. I realized that, if the police were after me, I couldn't cash a check without betraying myself. I went to a big west side hotel, rented a room, paying for it in advance and giving a false name, and locked myself in.

"The next morning the papers were openly accusing me of the crime. My disappearance from my hotel was considered a confession of guilt. After two years abroad I didn't know where my friends were and there were few of them I could trust. Tonight I was counting the remnants of my cash when your card with your address fell out. You sent it to me in a letter to Paris three months ago. Well, here I am. You're a fellow who always stands up to be counted."

"Yes, maybe," said Frank absently. "Owen, that dame was laying in wait for you in your hotel bar. Her job was to get you to that apartment the next afternoon. Otherwise you might have had a real alibi. A vacant apartment occupied, probably, without the knowledge of the landlord for a few hours. A girl who will never be seen again—Excuse me—"

Frank's bell rang. Three sharp rings. He leaped to his feet, his eyes sparkling with pleasure. He knew that ring.

"Wait a minute—" gasped Owen. But Frank had swung open the door.

Annabel Platt stood there, a bright smile on her face. She wasn't the cute little moth of the office, but a gay butterfly—a blue party wrap over a red silk dress. She was prettily rouged, her mouth a bright red bow.

"The concert is over," she said, "I thought— Oh!"

Owen had risen and was gazing at her with admiration.

CHAPTER IV

Accessories after the Fact

"WHAT'S the matter, Annabel?" asked Frank solicitously for the girl's eyes were big with terror. She was shaking with excitement.

"It's him—the murderer," she murmured.

"You're mistaken, Annabel," cried the writer. What an idiot he had been! He should have given Owen a chance to disappear into the bedroom before opening the door and he should have remembered that the girl downstairs had been Harleigh Porter's secretary. "You're all wrong."

"Isn't that Owen Porter?" she asked shrilly pointing at the stricken youth across the room.

"Yes, but—"

"I'll get the police," she screamed. "Help! Mur—"

Her cry was smothered because Frank's big hand was across her mouth. He lifted her over the threshold and slammed the door with his foot. The horror and incredulity in her eyes cut him to the heart but this was something that had to be done.

"I'll bind and gag you if you don't agree to keep quiet," he said harshly. "Do you want to send an innocent man to the chair?"

He removed his hand from her mouth. "He's not innocent," she cried passionately. "I saw him—"

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Frank thrust his left hand into his pocket, pulled out a roll of bills and tossed them to his friend. "Scram, old man," he pleaded. "This is your uncle's secretary."

"Oh, let her call the police," said Owen forlornly. "I'll get caught before the night is over anyway."

"Use your bean. Get out."

With his shoulders hunched despondently, Porter went out of the apartment and into a world where thousands of sleuths were hunting for him. Frank released Annabel. "I'm horribly sorry, dear," he said humbly.

Her eyes were scornful, her little hands were tightly clenched. "Did you or did you not threaten to gag and bind me so you could help a murderer to escape?"

"He's not a murderer, Annabel. That's not the man you saw at your office—"

"I loathe and despise you," she said through clenched teeth. "I wish I'd never seen you. I'm going right downstairs and phone the police that Owen Porter was here in your apartment and you prevented me from notifying them until he got away."

"Go ahead," he said solemnly. "It makes me an accessory and I'll get twenty years in jail, but you should do your duty."

She hesitated—tears came into her eyes. "I liked you, I thought you were nice—"

"That money I gave him is all I have in the world," Westerly told her. "Please, Annabel, listen for a minute before you phone."

"You better talk fast," she said sharply but her lower lip was quivering.

"Owen Porter and I were close friends in Paris. He's a swell fellow."

"The police say that he must have shot his uncle. Nobody else could have done it. He's a murderer and you were hiding him," she cried passionately.

"Annabel, I assure you he didn't go to his uncle's office that day," he said doggedly.

"I was in Mr. Porter's office when he phoned. I saw him come out of the elevator. I saw him go into the private office and leave almost immediately. I find him in your apartment—"

"Please—he says you couldn't identify him because you were not working for his uncle when he left for Europe nearly two years ago."

"I wasn't Mr. Porter's secretary, but I was working in the office. I remembered him and recognized him when he came in the other day. I recognized him tonight."

"I happen to know where he was when the murder was committed; that's why I know he isn't guilty, Annabel," he said earnestly.

She tossed her head. "In that case, let him prove where he was."

"Unfortunately he can't. Annabel, please listen. If he wanted to kill his uncle, he wouldn't have himself announced and walk through an office where everybody knew him. It was practically committing suicide for him to do that."

"ALL I know is that he did it," she said firmly. "I know something else. His uncle was furious with him. No doubt they quarrelled—"

"Annabel, somebody impersonated him. You didn't get a good look at him tonight. There's no light on but the reading lamp and he was standing up. His face was in the shadow. I've a career ahead of me. Do you suppose I would jeopardize it for a man I believed guilty of a brutal murder?"

"No-o," she said thoughtfully.

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"And you gave him all your money. And you profess to like me but you threatened to bind and gag me. You must be very good friends, you and this murderer."

"This boy has been framed," he pleaded. "He had no reason for killing his uncle. Don't you see it's impossible that he did it."

She shook her head stubbornly. "I have to believe my eyes," she stated. "Since he has escaped and because you would pay dearly for your good samaritanism, I won't notify the police, but our acquaintance is at an end, Mr. Westerly. Will you permit me to leave?"

"I can't stop you," he said dismally. "But I'll prove to you that your eyes did deceive you. I'll pin this crime on the right person—"

She paused at the door. "I'm sure the police will be grateful for your assistance. Good night, Mr. Westerly."

Annabel retreated in good order but, after she had unlocked her own door and entered her bedroom, she threw herself face down on her bed and wept for some minutes. She was saying good-by to a hope that had sprung up in her breast since she had encountered the good-looking young man upstairs in the doorway one night when she had forgotten her latchkey.

She had been very proper, very discreet in her handling of him—an occasional dinner and movie, but she liked him a lot. His liking for her was not to be mistaken. Yet he had been ready to bind and gag her for the sake of this criminal.

By and by it occurred to her that she ran a risk of being implicated if she failed to notify the police that she had seen the wanted man.

Westerly, upstairs, was also in a blue mood. He had talked big to Annabel, made boasts, but what on earth could he do in a situation like this? His heart bled for hunted Owen Porter. Owen was one of the gayest, most likable chaps he had ever met. He was generous, loyal, a marvelous friend as Frank had learned during their six months of friendship in Paris.

He believed the weird tale of the beautiful girl who lived in the untenanted apartment. He knew Owen was incapable of killing a fly. Yet on Annabel's positive identification alone, Owen would be tried and convicted of the murder of an uncle who had been kind to him and who had made him his heir.

CHAPTER V

Blind Flight

OWEN PORTER ran down the three flights of stairs and out the front door of the ancient residence remodeled into an apartment house for people like Annabel Platt and Frank Westerly and walked rapidly eastward, though he was not aware which way he had turned or why.

Life had been pretty soft for Owen Porter until now. That he wasn't a snob, a drunkard, or a roué was due to an innate decency, not his upbringing.

Owen had been born on a farm in Indiana. Many of the Porter family lived in the vicinity of Ramsberry, all of whom had had to scratch for a living. When Owen was eight years old, his father and mother died within a few months of each other. If they had lived, he probably would have grown up on a farm.

Owen Porter, his father, had a brother, Harleigh, who had run away from home at twelve, and who, at fourteen, was an office boy in Pittsburgh. At fifty, he was a big mogul in New York. He was notified of the death of

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the brother and his wife, but nothing was heard from him. The funeral was attended by three or four cousins of his father and their children—all Porters and all as poor as Job's turkey. None of them was eager to take the orphan boy, but they were saved the trouble for, the day after the funeral, Harleigh Porter drove up in a big car, bundled up his nephew and took him home with him.

Harleigh was a widower with no children. He lived in a huge bachelor apartment in Park Avenue and didn't wish his routine disturbed so the boy was sent to an expensive boarding school.

He then attended a very fashionable prep school and spent four years in Princeton.

On the rare occasions when he visited his uncle, the old gentleman was kind to him, but obviously didn't want to be bothered by him. No restraint was ever placed on him. He had a large allowance and there was no check upon his expenditure of it. When he graduated from Princeton well toward the foot of his class, his uncle made no protest against his going to Europe for a couple of years to finish his education.

If a boy who grew up like that was able to win the devotion of a fellow like Frank Westerly, there couldn't be much the matter with him.

He had gone to a hotel upon his return, after visiting a few days with his uncle. A suggestion that he go out to Pittsburgh and start at the bottom in the steel business hadn't sounded good to him and Harleigh hadn't put on the high pressure.

After two years abroad he had found few friends in New York, but a few nights back he had run into a couple of college classmates and they went down the line. There was a fight in a night place in the Village. Owen had been dragged to the police station. His pals had escaped and he was so lit that he gave his real name and it got into the papers.

He received a message from his uncle to report at his office next day, but he had decided to wait a couple of days and let the old boy cool off.

Now uncle Harleigh was dead. Owen believed he was his heir. But he wouldn't get the Porter millions, if he was convicted of murdering his uncle. And if he did, they wouldn't do him any good.

He turned into Third Avenue, brushing against a policeman before he observed him, but the officer paid no attention to him. In a city of six million people, it's not such an easy matter to pick up a fugitive.

After Owen's long absence there were very few persons in New York who knew him by sight. While the papers were plastered with his photographs the identification of a person from an ordinary photograph is difficult.

He did not know, of course, that stool pigeons are responsible for the capture of most wanted men. And the police often learn the haunts of the individual needed downtown and lurk about them until the criminal walks into their arms. With luck he might hide in New York for weeks before being captured.

THE papers had kindly supplied him with all the details regarding the murder of his uncle and the search for himself. There seemed no doubt that a man impersonating Owen Porter had killed Harleigh Porter.

While there was a private exit from the office of Harleigh Porter there was only one key and that was found in his

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pocket. Owen knew that the person representing himself as the nephew had killed Harleigh. Obviously that was his object in impersonating Owen Porter.

The report of a small revolver would not be heard outside the soundproof private office and the killer, as Owen Porter, had his getaway assured.

He had in his pocket, thanks to Frank's generosity, about a hundred dollars. He had his liberty, as yet. But all his luggage was at the East Side hotel where he had been living. He needed fresh linen right away and he had to find a hiding-place. Trains, boats and planes were being watched. Wasn't he safer in New York than in any other city? Even if he reached Canada he wouldn't be safe. Men wanted for murder can be extradited from almost every country in the world.

Besides, he didn't want to run away. His only chance was to find that girl who called herself Adams and force her to tell the truth. Hunting a needle in a haystack. Yes, but once in a while one finds a needle in a haystack. He was by no means as downhearted as he had been when he ventured to call on Frank Westerly. It was great to have a friend willing to go through for one, somebody who believed his preposterous story. Everything would turn out all right.

It was typical of Owen that he began to worry about Frank. If that girl reported to the police that he had been with Westerly and that Westerly had forcibly prevented her from giving the alarm, Frank would be sent to jail.

He turned into a drugstore, looked up Westerly's phone number and dialed it. Frank immediately answered.

"Owen speaking. Did I get you in trouble?"

"Where are you?"

"Second Avenue and Fifty-fifth, in a drugstore."

"I persuaded her to do nothing but she's off me for good I'm afraid."

"Gosh, old man, I'm sorry."

"I'll get over it—probably. Listen, she was in the office, though not your uncle's secretary two years ago. She is positive she recognized you. Couldn't persuade her differently. I'm coming over there. Wait for me."

"You keep out of this," commanded Owen. "I won't be here. No sense in your landing in jail." He hung up before Frank could answer.

That little girl could probably get him convicted, he thought as he left the drugstore. He felt weak and decided on a cup of coffee and turned back into the drugstore. There was a pile of morning papers, out at eleven the night before, and his name was in the headline.

He bought one, and while he sipped his coffee he glanced through the article about himself.

THERE was no longer any doubt about his guilt, according to the writer. It seems that the police had descended upon his hotel about six P.M. upon the day of the murder and had gone through his effects. They had found a thirty-two caliber revolver in one of his bags. The Bureau of Ballistics had just reported that the bullet which had killed Harleigh Porter had been fired from the gun found in the baggage of Owen Porter.

The printed lines blurred and then danced before his horrified eyes. And then Owen began to burn with rage. So they had carried the frame-up all the way. If he could lay his hands on the fiend who had planned this, he'd tear him to pieces and let them electro-

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cute him for *that*. He would die cheerfully.

He had not returned to his hotel that day. The gun in his bag was not loaded and hadn't been loaded for a year—what a fool a man would be to carry a loaded gun in his grip. According to the paper there were five bullets in the gun, the sixth had recently been fired.

The plot began at his hotel. They had stolen his revolver, had sent the siren to attract a young man who was known to fall for sirens, had made all ready for the rendezvous with her and, with him safely out of the way, had sent the impersonator to do his murderous work.

With the instinct of a fugitive he turned down a dark street. About half way down, a man bobbed up out of an areaway and presented a gun at him.

"Stick 'em up, Bo," he snarled.

Never did a hold-up man make a poorer choice of a victim. Owen was boiling with fury against his unknown enemies. The revolver in the hand of the man was of no significance to him whatever. Owen lashed out with his right and staggered the fellow who dared not discharge the weapon. But he struck Owen in the nose with the butt of it. And Owen hardly felt the blow. He grappled with the highwayman, tripped him and they went to the sidewalk, Owen on top. The gun fell, unheeded from the fellow's grasp. They punched and kicked and clawed at each other.

They rolled off the curb into a muddy gutter.

The robber was big and powerful, but Owen had the strength of a lunatic. He had been raging at the intangible; here was an enemy he could hit.

It was a dark street, nobody came to watch the combat. After a few minutes Owen discovered he was slugging an inanimate object. He rose reluctantly and spied the weapon laying on the sidewalk. Picking it up he thrust it into his pocket. He was bruised and battered but he felt a lot better. Owen had many good qualities but he rather enjoyed a brawl—though usually he kept out of them unless he had had a drink or two.

His nose hurt him and he became aware that he was plastered with mud and his coat was torn. He was back on Second Avenue walking aimlessly north and happened to get a glimpse of himself in a show window mirror. His nose was twice its normal size. He looked like a bum—nothing dapper about Owen Porter at the moment.

There was a cheap hotel at the next corner with a restaurant of uninviting aspect. In the window was a sign, "Dishwasher Wanted."

He hesitated, grinned and went into the place. He jerked his thumb back toward the sign.

"Filled that job?" he asked of the man behind the cash register. This was a weazened middle aged bald-headed Hebrew.

"I vant a dishwasher, not a hobo," he said contemptuously.

"What else can you get for a job like that but hobos? I'm willing to work."

The man chuckled. "Vell, I tink you're right. The kitchen is full of dirty dishes. Go to work. Five a week, a shakedown and eats."

A couple of minutes later Owen, his coat off, his sleeves rolled up, was gazing at the piled-up sink with dismay. A cook in dirty whites placed soap powder and dishrags on the edge of the sink.

"Get going, guy," he said out of the side of his mouth. Owen shrugged his shoulders. It would be some time be-

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fore the police came into this place looking for him.

CHAPTER IV

Westerly Takes a Big Chance

AFTER a troubled night, Frank Westerly rose at seven-thirty A.M., much earlier than his wont, and went out to a corner lunchroom for coffee and rolls. He bought the morning papers which were devoted almost entirely to the pursuit of Owen Porter who was fearlessly referred to as "the murderer."

Moodily Frank sipped his coffee. It was something that Owen was still at large, but they would catch the poor devil very shortly.

Considered in the cold morning light, Owen's alibi sounded preposterous. The police would brush it aside scornfully and railroad him to the electric chair. Yet Frank had no doubt of the truth of the tale. It meant that it was to the interests of somebody to kill Harleigh Porter and that person, with devilish ingenuity, had committed the crime in such a manner that an innocent man would pay the penalty for it.

Owen, a fugitive or in jail, could do nothing to establish his alibi. He had no near relatives or close friends to do it for him. Relatives! If Owen were convicted, the fortune which came to him by the death of his uncle would go to the cousins in the Middle West. Was it possible that the murderer would not only benefit by throwing suspicion from himself upon Owen, but also from the conviction and execution of Owen.

Frank Westerly was in no position to help his friend. He hadn't even received a description of Opal Adams. Annabel had intruded too soon. Owen's uncle's interests, legally Owen's until conviction, were lined up against him.

But it was possible, if they knew Owen's story, they would have the fairness to investigate his statement. They at least knew who else beside Owen would benefit by Harleigh's death.

He knew that the vice-president of the Supersteel was John Gammon. Gammon, he had been told by Annabel, was a hard, grim man, the Office Ogre. If Frank told him he had been visited by Owen and had permitted him to depart, Gammon might have him clapped in jail as an accessory. That was a chance Frank would have to take. Owen said he knew Frank was a fellow who "stood up to be counted" and he must justify that opinion.

It was the duty of the managers of the business which Owen now owned to make an effort to verify Owen's story and Gammon must be made to see it that way. If Westerly knew the Porter lawyers he would prefer to go to them but he didn't know them. He could find out from Gammon, even if Gammon refused to do anything himself.

He paid his check and left the lunchroom.

As he mounted the steps of his apartment house, the front door opened and Annabel Platt emerged.

At sight of him her little chin went up, her black eyes snapped angrily, and her ripe lips became a thin red line.

"Annabel," he began timidly.

"Don't speak to me," she cried stormily and came down the steps and passed him swiftly.

He gazed after her. That settled it. He'd risk jail and see Gammon. He'd prove to her that she was hard and unjust—and then forgive her. When he had cleared Owen Porter of the charge against him, Annabel would realize that

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one couldn't always believe the evidence of one's eyes.

At nine o'clock he presented himself at the offices of the Porter Supersteel Corporation and asked to see Mr. Gammon.

"Name, please?" requested the phone operator.

He gave his name.

"And business?" inquired the girl crisply. He hesitated. Of course Gammon would refuse to talk to a stranger. He saw a pencil and pad of paper on top of her desk. He wrote, *Message from Owen Porter,* folded it and said. "Just have this delivered, please."

She rang for an office boy, handed him the folded paper and Frank sat on a bench and watched the boy's progress across the big room. His eyes fell upon Annabel Platt who sat at her desk, her head bent over her typewriter.

She was typing the funeral arrangements for Harleigh Porter who was to be buried that afternoon.

The boy had vanished into a private office. The operator answered her phone.

"You're to go in," she said. "The boy will conduct you."

FRANK rose. He was very nervous. For all he knew he might be on his way to a prison cell. The boy appeared and beckoned. He followed him. Annabel lifted her head. She saw Frank Westerly. Why was he going into Mr. Gammon's office? She grew pale, her lips began to tremble. What did it mean? Was he going to confess that he had shielded Owen Porter? Mr. Gammon would have him arrested. Oh, the fool! the fool!

Frank was in the office. A big, grim, ugly man, behind a big desk, was scowling at him.

"Well," he snarled.

"My name is Frank Westerly—"

"I don't give a damn what your name is," thundered Gammon. "What's this message? How dare you bring a message from that murderous whelp?"

"My name is Frank Westerly," said Frank firmly. His heart, however, was sinking. Nothing could be done with this brute. "I am a friend of Owen Porter. I happen to know he didn't kill his uncle."

"You do; you do, do you?" bellowed Gammon. "And how in hell do you know?"

"He told me so," Frank said coolly.

Gammon grabbed his phone. "Get me the Commissioner of Police," he cried harshly. "Damn you, I'll clap you in a cell! Why didn't you turn him over to the police?"

"He convinced me of his innocence. I gave him all the cash I had and offered him every help in my power."

Gammon scowled at him fiercely, then his dreadful face cracked in a grin. He picked up his phone. "Cancel that call for the Commissioner," he commanded. He stared long and hard at the visitor. "Take a chair," he said in a tone that was strangely mild. "If Owen convinced me of his innocence, I'd give him dough and tell him to get under cover. But, damn it, he walked right in here and shot the old man. Everybody knows that."

"I don't know it, sir. Owen says he never came near this office, that he hasn't been here for two years. I believe him."

"Westerly? Say, I buy mystery novels. They put me to sleep. You the writer of *Doomed Men?*"

"Yes," said Frank greatly elated.

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This was the first of his readers he had met in the flesh.

"Bought six of them books last night. Picked up yours first. Great book. Put me to sleep in five minutes. Better than an opiate. So you gave the kid all the cash you had. And you can't be a fool if you can write crime books. You've got nerve! You're accessory after the fact."

"Owen is not his uncle's murderer," declared Frank. "I'll take a chance for him."

He spoke stoutly. He was no longer afraid of John Gammon. He might be a noisy, surly office ogre but he was a man. Their eyes met and fastened. Suddenly the ogre's eyes began to glisten.

"All right, son," he said mildly. "You're wrong as hell. The boy was out of his mind. The evidence against him is conclusive. He called up Harleigh, made an appointment and kept it, was recognized by the office force, went into Harleigh's office, shot the old man down like a dog, walked out breezily and had the impudence to call up later to make sure he did a good job."

"At the time when his uncle was shot, Owen was being entertained by a young woman, whom he had picked up at a bar the night before, in an apartment."

"A prepared alibi shows premeditation, young man, and makes the crime more heinous."

"THE woman entertained him in an apartment which was untenanted, sir. Owen read of the crime in the evening extras. He went back to ask the girl to testify for him. She was gone. The janitor declared that nobody had been in that apartment that afternoon. A frame up, Mr. Gammon."

"Or a damn lie," said Gammon who scratched the back of his red neck. "So the tale is that somebody impersonated him."

"That's what Owen and I believe."

"I never saw much of the boy. He was wild as a hawk. It's hard to believe he would murder his uncle but this impersonation business won't wash."

"I'm going to find that woman and squeeze the truth out of her," declared Frank Westerly. "Don't you realize that impersonating the nephew was the best way to get into Mr. Porter's office and also the best protection for the murderer? What had Owen to gain by killing his uncle?"

"Thirty or forty millions," said Gammon dryly.

"Has he gained them?" demanded Frank.

Gammon looked thoughtful. "Well, no. Confound it, you're making me wonder. It looked dead open and shut."

"The reason I came to see you, sir, is that Owen is a fugitive. I don't know anything about Mr. Porter's affairs. Owen was abroad for two years, he has no friends to help him. If he's innocent, you don't want him to be convicted. Who, besides Owen, would benefit by Mr. Porter's death?"

Gammon stuck out his thick lips. "Various people and interests in various ways. Westerly, you write rotten novels, but damned if I don't think you're all right. They'll fry Owen sure as shooting, if they catch him. If there is a plot, the only chance is to split it wide open. You said you gave him all your cash. Where is he—confidentially?"

Frank sighed. "I don't know, sir. I offered to keep him in my apartment, but he refused because it would incrim-

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inate me. I couldn't hold him." He discreetly kept Annabel's intrusion to himself.

Gammon was writing a check. "Here's five hundred dollars," he said. "When you've spent it, come back for more. Need a couple of big fists, call me at the Waldorf where I live. Common sense tells me that the boy is guilty as hell. Now tell me exactly what Owen told you."

Frank had narrated Owen's story while the big man listened intently. There was an interruption. A thin pale man with curious eyes, bright green, had entered in response to a buzzer from Gammon's desk.

"Mr. Westerly," said Gammon. "Our chief auditor, Graves. Graves, you saw Owen Porter the other day, didn't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"How sure are you?" shouted Gamman who thumped his desk top with his big fist.

The man trembled. "I—I couldn't be mistaken, sir," he said shakily.

"You don't think it was an actor impersonating Owen?"

"Certainly not, sir," he declared firmly.

"Graves, this is Mr. Westerly. He's an authority on crime. Modern Sherlock Holmes—" Gammon grinned at Owen derisively. "He claims it was not Owen who killed his uncle. I half believe him. Cash this check for Mr. Westerly and be quick about it. Name is Frank Westerly."

The auditor eyed Frank sharply. Westerly didn't like the expression in the green eyes of the fellow.

"I had no idea of getting money from you, Mr. Gammon," said Frank when the auditor had departed. "I'm expecting a big check and I'll return this five hundred dollars—"

GRAVES entered as Gammon replied. "When you see Owen, tell him—" He broke off and scowled at the Auditor. "Listen you," he roared. "Keep a still tongue in your head. You heard nothing. You know nothing. Get me?"

"Yes, sir," said the man nervously. He left the room after handing Frank his check. Outside, he turned into a different person. He crossed the office briskly. He picked up his telephone, hesitated, hung it up and crossed to the locker room. In a couple of minutes he emerged wearing his hat and street coat.

"How do you plan to proceed?" Gammon demanded of Frank.

"I don't know where Owen is—"

"Sure?"

"Positive. I'm going first to call on the janitor of that apartment on East 54th Street.

"Keep in touch with me, will you? I'm going to do some intensive thinking about who besides Owen might want poor old Harleigh out of the way. And give me your flipper. I've been loyal to Harleigh for thirty years. I loved him like a brother. I want the right man fried for this job, even if its Owen Porter. Good-by."

Frank went out of Gammon's office in a glow. Annabel's ogre was a Prince. When the Hollywood check came in, he'd give Mr. Gammon back the five hundred. At the moment the cash was very handy. He glanced at Annabel's desk. It was vacant, but he spied her near the exit. As he approached, she opened the door and went out into the corridor of the building. When Frank arrived in the corridor she was waiting for him.

"What are you doing here?" she demanded sharply. "What business could you have with Mr. Gammon."

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"It may interest you to know, Miss Platt," he said complacently, "that Mr. Gammon agrees with me that Owen is innocent. Well, he doesn't exactly agree, but he wants him to have his chance."

Her black eyes sparkled wrathfully. "You were mad enough to tell him about last night. Frank, he's a wicked violent man. He'll have you arrested."

"Not him. Will you have dinner with me tonight?"

She tossed her head. "I told you I was through with you," she said firmly. "I don't want to get into trouble." Her manner abruptly changed and tears came into her eyes. Aware of them, she opened the office door and went inside.

He hesitated, smiled and went over and rang for the elevator. Annabel would come around. She'd be sorry she wanted to turn an innocent young man over to the police. She would be thrilled with admiration for the detective ability of Frank Westerly when he had solved this mystery.

CHAPTER VII

Fight in the Dark

IT'S one thing, however, to concoct a plot with a surprise ending and work backwards to the crime, as many mystery story writers do and another to solve a problem when you don't know anything about the people concerned and have practically nothing to work on.

At ten o'clock that evening, Frank arrived at his apartment building after having accomplished nothing whatever. The task he had set himself was to establish Owen's alibi. If he could find somebody living in the building on 54th Street who had seen a young woman entering or leaving the apartment which the man on the ground floor had insisted was untenanted, it would be very helpful. If somebody had seen there a young man who looked like Owen, it would be even more helpful. If somebody had seen the name card upon the plate above the bell of the apartment that would be important. He had gone to the building on East 54th Street directly from the Porter offices.

It was a five-story house, a brownstone front, once a swank residence and now broken up into small apartments, two or three on each floor. Four of them had no names upon the doorplates at the entrance. He began ringing bells. He succeeded in finding at home an old Jewish woman who lived on the top floor and had seen or heard nothing.

The janitor of the building lived in a basement next door. He operated three of the converted brownstone fronts. He insisted that, if anybody had been in apartment seven, they had entered and left without his knowledge. Who were the previous tenants? A Mr. and Mrs. Joyce, who had been put out for non-payment of rent and, naturally, had left no address.

The janitor was a Swede named Nordstrum. Frank thought he was probably telling the truth. Anybody with a key to the front door and to apartment seven would have no trouble going in and making himself or herself comfortable—for a few hours anyway. The back apartment on the third floor, number six, was also untenanted. That was a bad break. Nordstrum said he would ask the other tenants, if they had seen or heard anything going on in apartment seven and advised Frank to return in the evening.

"Most of all the people in the house work during the day," he said.

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Frank tried to check possibilities as a police detective would do.

Well, there was the taxi driver who delivered Owen at the apartment about two thirty. He might remember him and the taxi man who took him away at four o'clock. A taxi man might remember delivering the girl at that address. She must be very pretty to attract a connoisseur like Owen Porter. Mr. Gammon, if he became fully converted to Frank's theory, might set private detectives to locating the taximen.

The hotel bar! A bartender might remember Owen and the young woman with whom he had chatted the night before the murder. Owen himself could contribute more details. A description of the girl, but Owen had disappeared.

At five o'clock Westerly was in the Bekhart Bar. Owen had been stopping at the Bekhart. It was a large bar with five or six bartenders. Frank questioned each one of them. Unfortunately Owen had been living there only a few days.

All of them had read about the murder case, but none remembered the young man.

"Lots of girls come in here to get fellers to buy drinks for them," said an Irish bartender with a broad grin. "And they got to be good looking or they'll have no luck. We wouldn't be paying any attention to who was talking to who. And what does it matter? Sure he didn't kill his uncle until the next day."

Back to the house on Fifty-fourth Street. Accompanied by Nordstrum Westerly interviewed all the tenants. A man on the ground floor remembered a young man who insisted that a Miss Opal Adams lived in apartment seven, but he hadn't observed what he looked like. And this man had assured him that nobody lived in that apartment. He thought the fellow was drunk.

Aside from that, no information was obtained. And this man's recognition of Owen wouldn't have been important, since the distracted youth had called many hours after Harleigh Porter had been shot tho death.

Frank dined disconsolately. He had run down the only clues he had and got nothing. He read the late evening papers full of the hunt for his friend. Wild reports of men answering Owen's description had come in from Boston, Albany and other points. He would go home and try to persuade Annabel to let him into her apartment and explain things. She had had an engagement with him for the evening. It was off, now, of course, but she would be home.

HE rang. Annabel opened her door. She wore a pretty red negligee and her hair was tousled. She frowned, made to close the door and then relented. She smiled.

"Well, come in for a minute," she conceded. "But I haven't forgotten your brutality."

"Dear, I was saving a man's life."

"A murderer," she said tartly.

"A victim of a plot, dear."

"Well, I was too angry to listen to you last night. Suppose you tell me why you think so. If Mr. Gammon takes some stock in your mad tale, perhaps it's not so crazy."

Gartefully he rushed into his story. He told her what a fine chap Owen was at heart, admitted his wildness and then related how he met a strange girl in the hotel bar, how he had made the engagement and had had been kept in the apartment on Fifty-fourth Street

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for an hour and a half, time enough for his impersonator to commit the murder. He broke off suddenly.

"Well, what's the matter?" she asked impatiently.

"Nothing, nothing."

But there was something. He had heard footsteps overhead and his apartment was directly overhead. Somebody was up there—in his quarters. He tried to take up the thread of his discourse, but was no longer eloquent. Evidently Owen had come to the only place where he knew he was welcome. How had he gotten in? He had no key, of course. But he might have come up the fire escape from the yard below. Frank, having little that was worth stealing, rarely troubled to lock his windows. He dare not confide, yet, in Annabel who had been devoted to the man who had been brutally slaughtered by the presumptive Owen Porter.

"Let's go out somewhere," he asked eagerly. She might hear the footsteps.

"Certainly not. I'm putting you out in a few minutes."

But, now, there was no sound above. Evidently Owen had seated himself or had laid himself down on the couch. He caught up the thread of his story and continued to the end.

"I don't want to do anybody an injustice," the girl said thoughtfully. "It's true I only saw Mr. Porter two years ago from across the office but I was sure I recognized him when he came in the day before yesterday. I had heard him making the appointment with his uncle on the phone. So naturally I supposed—oh, Frank, it's all too absurd! You admit he's wild and drinks and probably he has an ungovernable temper. His uncle infuriated him with his reproaches. Besides they found his revolver at his hotel with one empty chamber and it's been proved that the bullet that killed Mr. Porter came out of that revolver."

"I tell you it's a plot," he said doggedly.

"That's because you're a story writer, always making up ridiculous plots. Please go now."

"But Annabel—"

"Why should anybody want him to be accused of the crime and build up all that fantastic machinery—"

"All I know is that somebody did and I'm going to find him."

SHE smiled brightly and offered him both her hands. "You're a very loyal friend. I hope you're right but I doubt if he's worth the effort. After all one must believe the evidence of one's eyes. Good night, Frank."

He had to go and he was willing because he wanted to see Owen. What on earth could he do about him? The apartment wasn't a safe place for the poor devil to hide. He went up the stairs hastily, thrust his key in the door and threw it open. The room was in darkness.

He felt for the light switch and became aware of heavy breathing. "Owen!" he called softly.

A pair of heavy hands descended upon his shoulders. "Got him," a hoarse voice announced triumphantly. The door had slammed behind him as he was dragged into the center of the room by the fellow who had pounced upon him.

He had had a glimpse of a second individual during the brief space of time that the door had been open.

His captor had caught him from behind, his strong hands were pinning Westerly's arms to his sides. Frank kicked back viciously with his right heel which crashed against a shin bone.

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With a howl of pain his captor released his right arm to enable him to drive a heavy blow at Westerly's head.

Frank tore himself loose and dived at the second man whom he felt rather than saw to be a few feet in front and coming in.

He missed him with his outstretched arms but his head drove against the fellow's knees and he went to the floor, swearing lustily. The man who had been kicked plunged into the fray but his first blow, driven blindly, struck his companion.

This man was grappling with Westerly. He had him down.

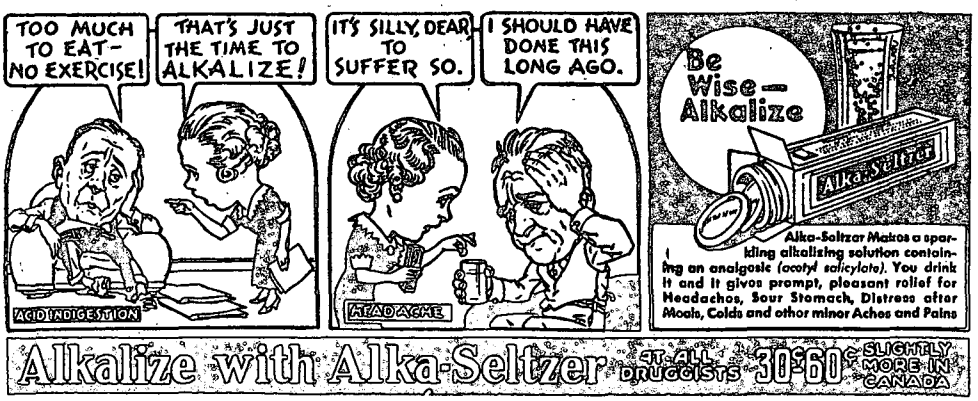
"Turn on the light, you fool," he snarled. "I can hold him. Let's see what we're doing."

Frank was fighting savagely, using both fists and feet, but he had lost his momentary advantage. The light flashed on as he wriggled out of the grip of his antagonist. He found himself beside his wrought-iron smoking stand. He got to his knees and swung with it. It struck his antagonist upon the shoulder and he drew back with a howl of pain.

"Slug him, you thick head," he commanded of his companion. This was a squat, brutish, unshaven thug who was pulling a blackjack out of his pocket. Frank rushed at him, brandishing the smoking stand. The man who already had felt its weight, deftly tripped him and he fell upon his face. The fellow with the blackjack swooped upon him and let fly with his club, but Westerly rolled out of the way in time to dodge it. He was up. He ducked a savage blow from the second intruder, planted a hard right to his face, then was in the grip of the blackjack wielder. Frank got hold of the hand that held the weapon. They wrestled and fell against a heavy chair which toppled with a mighty crash.

Suddenly the battle was over. The heavy boot of the man who was standing by collided with the youth's head and he went completely out.

Frank Westerly must now prove that he is more than a writer of detective stories. He has come to actual grips with a mysterious conspiracy which may send his best friend to the electric chair. Is he making a grave mistake in trusting Vice President Gammon? And can he depend on Annabel Pratt to keep her mouth shut? His present predicament within the walls of his own room does not look promising for him. Don't fail to read the next gripping installment of THE MOGUL MURDERS, because Frank Westerly and Annabel Platt—and you, yourself—are going to be astonished in more ways than one.


TOO MUCH TO EAT— NO EXERCISE!
THAT'S JUST THE TIME TO ALKALIZE!
ACID INDIGESTION
IT'S SILLY, DEAR, TO SUFFER SO.
I SHOULD HAVE DONE THIS LONG AGO.
HEADACHE
Be Wise— Alkalize
Alka-Seltzer
Alka-Seltzer Makes a sparkling alkalizing solution containing an analgesic (acetyl salicylate). You drink it and it gives prompt, pleasant relief for Headaches, Sour Stomach, Distress after Meals, Colds and other minor Aches and Pains
Alkalize with Alka-Seltzer
At All Druggists 30¢ 60¢
Slightly More in Canada

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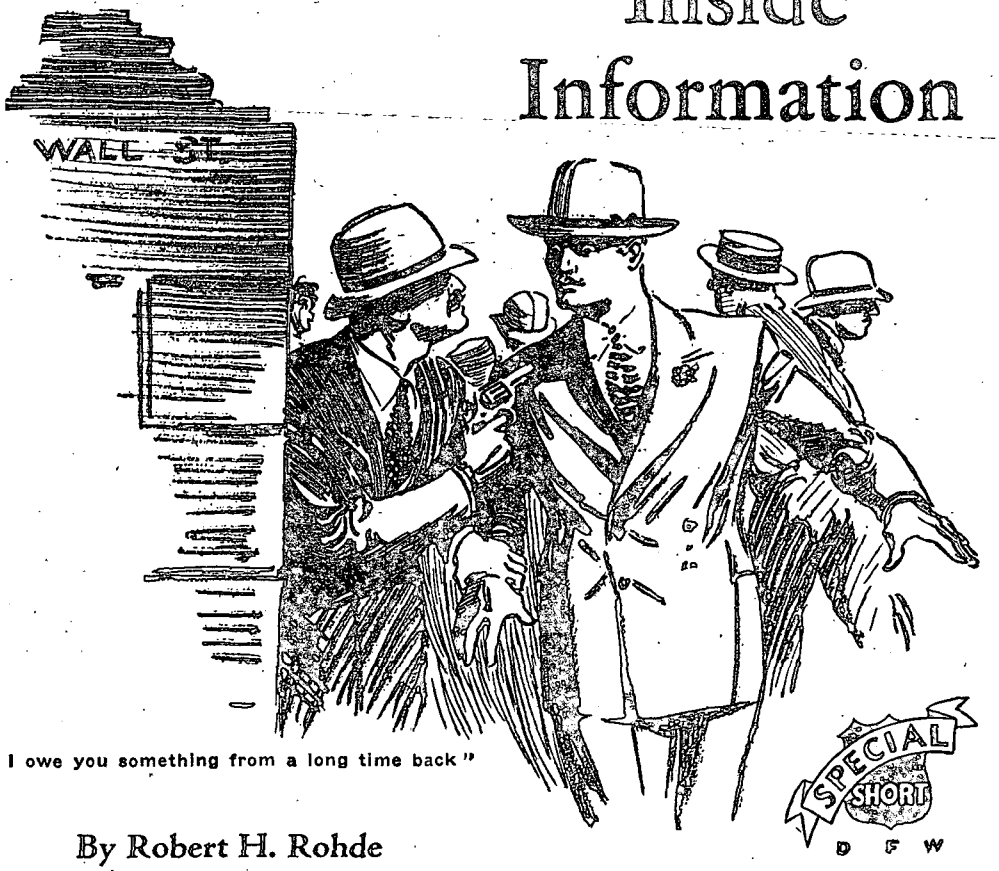

"I owe you something from a long time back"

By Robert H. Rohde

Andrew Gerst, Wealthy Stock Market Operator, Had Murder on His Mind — So He Calmly Spent a Million Dollars for a Fool-Proof Alibi

IT was not like Andrew Gerst to drink too much, nor to let his tongue run unbridled. But just once in his life he did both. Sitting with George Bevan gulping highballs in a night club uptown, he spoke suddenly out of a dour silence. His words came very suddenly, very softly, but very clearly.

"You know, Bevan, I ought to kill you. Yes, I should. And some day—at my convenience, of course—I really believe I will."

Bevan laughed. The next morning he had forgotten. Men got queer ideas and said wild things when they were drinking. Why hold them in mind?

But Gerst had meant exactly what he said. He never forgot. Never forgot for one single waking moment during eight long years, and never forgave Bevan. Never saw him or thought of him again in all the hundred months between the Autumn of the Big Crash and the Summer of the Big Heat, without thinking murder.

Andrew Gerst was that way. In

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Wall Street, with his fluid millions of capital and his almost occult knowledge of stock trends, he had relentlessly maneuvered the ruin of no less than a score of fellow speculators who had earned his enmity; jockeyed them into corners, stripped them to their last dollar, scourged them out of the market with their credit so utterly demolished that not one had managed to come back. He could have inflicted the same punishment on George Bevan. But in Bevan's case it wasn't enough.

There had been a woman who had left Gerst for Bevan. In bald truth, she had simply left one "love nest" for another, for Gerst had never had the faintest intention of marrying her and Bevan had not concealed from her the fact that he already had a wife. She was beautiful, but definitely no bargain; another man than Andrew Gerst might have shrugged and called it good riddance when she went. She was not irreplaceable. Far from it. At the crook of a rich man's finger, New York could supply ten thousand others no less attractive in face and form, coveting luxury and not only willing but eager to pay what it took to attain it.

Gerst, though, had not seen it that way. He hadn't loved the girl, had never loved any woman and never would. But he had the vanity of a whole-souled egotist, and the wound to his vanity was a wound to his heart. Time could not, and did not, heal it. Only revenge would do that, and the one revenge which fitted was death. As the years rolled on, the thought remained steadfast. Psychologists would have called it a "fixation."

A cardinal rule with Andrew Gerst was never to be in haste. His patience was as long as his memory. Possessed by that "*idée fixe*," he ceaselessly schemed and rejected. He considered, early, the employment of a hired assassin. But that would have been too dangerous. Forever after, he would have to be meeting blackmail demands, each heavier than the last.

Other methods of squaring accounts with Bevan, coldly and methodically reasoned out, all had their drawbacks. Every one of them, poison, knife, bullet, carried too great a threat of consequences to be risked. Along with revenge, Gerst meant to have security. To walk in the shadow of retribution through the rest of his own life, never knowing at what minute a hand might fall upon his shoulder—that was unthinkable. There must be another way. Some day, at long last, he would find it.

In the end, when Gerst finally hit on the way, it had taken eight years to show it to him. Eight years, and a heat wave that outblistered any other ever recorded since the United States Weather Bureau opened shop in its ærie over New York harbor.

THE heat wave had ridden into town over the week end, swept by a furnace blast from burned-out fields of wheat and corn in the stricken West. It was the big news in Monday morning's papers. The city, they said, would swelter for at least the whole coming week.

Wall Street, although the sun had not yet scorched deep into that narrow, high-walled canyon, was already a bake-oven when Gerst got down town at ten A.M. Full-bodied and full-blooded, he almost wished that he had stayed another day or two in the country.

But that was something else that would not have been good business There was money to be made in Wall

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Street this week, easy money and a lot of it for the insiders who knew what he knew about the imminent merger between American Heavy Industries and International Iron & Steel. Not for a year past had the stock market offered such a rich chance; in the days that must elapse before the papers got wind of the news, he could pick up a quick, sure million. Against the million, what was the heat?

Walking down from Trinity he murmured, "Pshaw—just a little heat!" But it was more than a little. To point it, there was a shirt-sleeved, sweating crowd at the Broad Street corner and an ambulance was clanging down through Nassau. Gerst heard somebody say: "It's a bank messenger. The sun got him. He went nuts all of a sudden. Began yelling and tearing up money and bonds."

It wasn't, after all, any concern of Gerst's. He moved along; but somehow, strangely, he kept thinking about the heat and the maddened messenger. The young fellow had a gun on him, of course; nowadays every bank messenger carried one. What if he'd started blazing away there in front of Morgan's, killed somebody? Certainly, no one could hold him responsible. It would have been just one of those things. Not murder. Not even manslaughter. The law would have to look at it in the light of "an act of God."

It was an interesting line of conjecture. Distinctly interesting, Gerst found it. He stopped in the lower hall of the lean skyscraper where George Bevan's brokerage suite took in half a tower floor and mopped his forehead and posed himself another question.

Suppose that bank messenger, cutting loose with his pistol, had shot not a stranger but some one known to him? What would the law do then? What could it do? Even should it be suspected that the shooting had been by design, what possibility was there of proof?

Why, it would be foolish for the State ever to put such a suspicion before a jury! Twelve men who knew what today's heat had been, who'd been through it themselves, who'd read in their newspapers of "heat" deaths, prostrations and cases of heat-induced insanity like the messenger's—what chance of their convicting? Nothing to it! They'd boo the prosecution out of court!

An elevator shot Andrew Gerst thirty-nine stories skyward and he walked into Bevan & Company's customers' room. Ordinarily the figures chalked on the big quotation board were pregnant with meaning to him, down to the smallest fraction; but this morning they were all a blur as his keen, small eyes automatically brushed over them.

One thing only he observed. There had been no leak to the public on the steel merger. The stocks of Heavy Industries and International Iron & Steel—shares that would skyrocket under an avalanche of non-professional buying orders once news of the consolidation was out—were both sluggish. In that dormant market, strategically scattered buying today and tomorrow and Wednesday would certainly put him in line for a million-dollar slice of the juicy melon bound to be cut when H. I. and I. I. & S. pooled their mighty resources.

Amazingly, though, he found that he didn't give a rap about the merger or the market. What really mattered was that in these last few minutes he had discovered the answer to a problem that for eight years had defied solution.

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Now he knew how to commit murder and get away with it!

TOWARD noon George Bevan came into the customers' room, big, broad, almost as blond as that expensive little beauty whom Gerst had taken out of the Fantasies of '28 chorus before the crash and set up on Park Avenue with a French maid, a French poodle, a wardrobe of French imports and a checking account generously but prosaically endowed with plain, ordinary American cash.

Long ago Bevan had broken with gold-digging Gloria Nash. Probably, Gerst thought, he would have had to wrinkle his forehead today to bring back her name. But that made no difference. What had happened had happened. The books still had to be balanced.

It was in anticipation of that balancing that Andrew Gerst, years since, had dropped other brokers and concentrated his trading through the Bevan firm. And to Bevan the thousands in commissions which the account annually represented had argued convincingly, as Gerst meant it should, that the incident of the capricious blonde was closed and permanently shelved.

Bevan, coming to Gerst's chair in front of the long blackboard, wore a moist grin.

"Whew! Hot enough for you?"

Gerst shook his head.

"Can't remember when I've felt the heat so. I can't take it the way I used to."

"Just come in?'

"No. I've been here all morning."

"Really?" Bevan blinked. "It's hard to believe. Unless I missed something, you haven't bought or sold a single damn share this forenoon."

Gerst, for a fact, had done no trading. An hour ago he had scribbled a "Buy" order, but immediately an inner whisper had cautioned, "Wait! Think it over!" and instead of putting the order through he had torn it up.

He had thought it over, knew now that he was going to toss that soft million over his shoulder. Yes, and toss another million after it. Eight years he'd waited to strike his balance with George Bevan. He'd wait not many hours longer. But he'd play safe. *Safe!*

"I'm not in a trading mood," he said to Bevan. "Don't see anything I like. Why the devil I came into town I don't know. Force of habit I guess."

Later, lunching at the Savarin, Gerst saw Bevan again. The broker had his pretty, brown-haired young sister as a luncheon guest, and later Carey Hollister joined them. Hollister, tall, dark, keen-eyed, was George Bevan's brother-in-law. All but double his brother-in-law, for Bevan's wife was Hollister's sister, and now Hollister was paying court to Millicent Bevan.

Gerst stopped at their table for a moment's chat, and as he moved on, he felt that that had been a stroke of genius. He had, certainly, impressed on Carey Hollister that his relations with Bevan were entirely cordial. That helped, for Hollister was top assistant in the District Attorney's office and his word would go a long way there.

Outside the Savarin, the mercury stood at 102 in the shade. In Wall Street, when Gerst started uptown at three o'clock, it was two degrees higher and still mounting.

There was no let up even after the sun was gone. Heat baked into the city's brick and steel and concrete during the terrific day welled back smotheringly in the evening, and no breeze stirred.

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At midnight Gerst called the house physician to his hotel suite.

"Can't sleep," he complained. "What can you give me?"

"Nothing better than sound advice. The heat's got you down. Get away from it. Get up to the mountains or to the seashore."

"Can't do that either. Business won't permit."

"Then try to relax. Take things easy. Steer clear of alcohol—and opiates."

Gerst spoke of pains in his head; got that over, he thought, quite neatly.

"A touch of sun," the doctor said. "Remember it tomorrow. Don't expose yourself. Find shade and stay in it. Right now, take a tepid bath and a cool shower. You'll feel better."

Then he left, one more witness on the right side of the ledger.

The doctor's parting injunction had been, "Keep your mind off the heat," but that was more than Gerst could do. His one fear now was that the Weather Bureau was wrong, that the heat wave wouldn't hold on. Just before dawn a spatter of raindrops roused him out of a doze, and he awoke cursing. But it was just a spatter. Before the sidewalks were wet the rain had stopped, and the sun came up smoking hot. The morning paper at the door headlined: "RECORD HEAT GRIPS CITY; HOTTER TODAY!"

When he surveyed himself in the mirror after his shower, Gerst saw that the restless night had left its mark upon him. His eyes were shadowed and his face was drawn. He murmured, "Perfect!"

At half past ten he sat haggard in the customers' room at Bevan & Company's and read in the figures going up on the blackboard that the insiders were beginning to set themselves for the merger harvest. There was activity, finally, in Heavy Industries; cautious activity, with only fractional advances. But it told the story.

AT eleven o'clock Gerst scrawled the first order of the week. His hand shook a little. He was throwing away a million dollars, and he knew it, with those strokes of his pencil. Really throwing away two millions, for he was losing a million where he might have been winning one. But overnight he had steeled himself to the loss. With half a dozen other millions safe in gilt-edged securities, out of reach of the market, he could stand it. And it wasn't actually a loss. It was a million for insurance.

That order brought George Bevan hurrying out of his private office. He had the slip in his hand, stared at it incredulously.

"You want this to go through, Andrew?"

Gerst nodded. "Of course."

"You're *selling* Heavy Industries? Selling short?"

"That's right."

"But—fifty thousand shares in one swoop! Great Scott, man, you know what that means on a twenty point margin! And I've just heard—"

"Don't give a damn what you've heard!" snapped Gerst. "Sell! Sell!"

Bevan looked at him hard.

"I hate to do it. Your account—that's not it, of course. We're covered, and plenty over. But—"

"Execute the order," said Gerst. "*Sell!*"

Then for another half hour he watched the board. He saw the market wobble under the impact of that tremendous short sale; saw it come back as the eager insiders, playing their sure thing, swept in those fifty thou-

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sand shares. Then Heavy Industries was rising, soaring steadily by bigger fractions, by full points. Gerst knew that his million was as good as gone, that H. I. would be up at least fifty points before the market leveled off.

But vengeance and immunity, wrapped up together—he had bought them both with that million, and cheap they were at the price!

AT twenty minutes after twelve that Tuesday Andrew Gerst shot and killed George Bevan.

It happened on the same blazing Broad and Wall corner, outside the House of Morgan, where a bank messenger had suddenly gone crazy scarcely twenty-four hours earlier. Luncheon-bound with Gerst, Bevan was still more deeply concerned about that reckless short sale of Heavy Industries, urging his star client to pocket his loss and pull out.

Andrew Gerst wore a thin, set smile as he listened. He said softly: "I know my business. I always know it."

Then his voice muted down to a whisper.

"Let me remind you, Bevan. I owe you something from a far time back. *Here it is!*"

There were, at the noon hour, many thousands within earshot of the two sharp reports that sent crackling echoes down Broad Street and through Wall.

Among those thousands, hundreds knew Bevan by sight. Even more knew Andrew Gerst, the spectacular plunger who by reputation and by the record had been on the ground floor of every big stock deal since the Great War.

They saw Bevan down, dead, one bullet in his forehead and another in his chest. They saw Gerst standing beside him, dazedly staring at a smoking pistol. But the actual shooting, the swift appearance of the gun, the instant jerking of the trigger—it was all so sudden, so utterly out of the blue, that not one pair of eyes in all the thousands had seen that.

A very few minutes later they took Andrew Gerst away. But not, of course, in a police-wagon. Manifestly a victim of the heat, he went as that stricken bank messenger had gone yesterday; and at the end of the ambulance's noisy dash uptown it was no murderer's cell that awaited him but a cool, private room in Bellevue Hospital's "observation" wing.

He lay there for many hours before the hospital staff permitted detectives from the Headquarters homicide division to question him. When they appeared, they had already satisfied themselves through routine inquiry downtown and at his hotel that the shooting had not been premeditated.

They knew that he had a pistol permit and habitually went about armed not only because he often carried large amounts of cash, but because his wealth and prominence made him a likely victim for kidnapers. They had talked to the house physician and to Bevan & Company clients and clerks; knew from them that he had markedly suffered from the heat.

So the detectives were sympathetic rather than hard-bitten, respectful to the point of deference. Gerst knew when they left him that he had played his part flawlessly, that his horror and remorse had registered as entirely genuine.

He remembered nothing of the tragedy; remembered nothing, he brokenly told them, from the moment of leaving the hotel—nothing except that the subway had been intolerably hot as he rode downtown. That was

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his story, and quite evidently not one of the Headquarters men doubted it. When they learned about his tremendously costly plunge in Heavy Industries, found out he had definitely known that those shares would go up instead of down, he would be forever out of all jeopardy.

His name, he knew, was plastered over the front pages—but what of that? He'd been thinking lately that he'd like to turn his back for good on the Street and live abroad. Now he'd go.

He had the best of lawyers. For years Markham, Lancaster & Markham, one of the most impressive legal firms in Wall Street, had been under retainer to him, and on Tuesday evening Joel Markham himself sat at his bedside. He had brought a brace of expensive alienists, both very polite, very solicitous, very sure that Gerst was blameless.

WHEN the doctors withdrew, Gerst saw that a uniformed policeman was posted in the hall outside his door. Markham, catching his wince, quickly reassured him.

"You've got enough on you," he said, "without worrying about *that*. It's just a formality—technical custody. Have no fear. You're facing no trial for murder. We all know, police and District Attorney, too, that this was a clear case of insanity superinduced by the heat. Right now, Gerst, you're as sane as I am. However, I believe you'll be better off for a few weeks in a sanitarium. You'll be under no restraint, and the rest will do you more good than harm. Wish I could go with you. Absolutely I do."

That was exactly what Gerst had anticipated—a brief stay in a sanitarium, some private institution where the value of money was well understood and where he would be treated more like a guest than a patient. It was a prospect far from unpleasant. Cheerfully considering it, and studying the nice profile of his dark-haired night-nurse under drooping eyelids, he fell into a dreamless, untroubled sleep.

In the morning, directly after Gerst had finished the light breakfast decreed for "heat cases," young Carey Hollister came in and sat beside him. Hollister had a newspaper in his pocket, but it was folded and the only headline Gerst could see was over some piece of political news, wholly uninteresting to him.

For a moment Hollister was silent, his lean, deeply-tanned face unwontedly sober. He said finally:

"I must tell you, Gerst, that my visit is official. Do you feel able to answer a few questions?"

Gerst nodded. "Quite. But yesterday is still all a blank."

"Is it possible that you've forgotten a certain extremely big stock transaction?"

"Good Lord!" Gerst raised on an elbow "What was it?"

"A deal in American Heavy Industries stock. Fifty thousand shares. May I ask if you had any inside information on Heavy Industries?"

"I did. Yes."

"It was on the strength of it, then, that you sold fifty thousand short?"

Gerst stared. "*Sold?*" he gasped. "I went short fifty thousand on Heavy Industries? Madness!"

"You call it that?"

"Absolutely. I've lost a fortune."

Hollister was looking at him queerly. His voice was queer, too. "Lost?"

"Of course I lost. I was out of my head. What better proof?"

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The newspaper was in Hollister's hand. He spread it open, jabbed a brown, muscular finger at a headline:

STEEL MERGER OFF;
SHARES CRASH!

THE sudden hardening of Andrew Gerst's stare was not acting. "It can't be!" he wheezed. "Impossible!" Hollister's steady gaze narrowed. "You made an extremely sane trade, it appears. You say the heat made you kill George Bevan. But that'll be hard to prove when the State can show so plainly that it didn't make you forget your inside information. What do *you* think, yourself?"

The headline type was dancing before Gerst's rivetted eyes, his brain whirling. "But you're wrong, Hollister!" he hoarsely protested. "My inside information was that the stock would go up. High up. Bevan had heard it, too. He begged me to cancel the order."

"Bevan's dead."

"Yes. But half a dozen people must have heard him tell me I was making the mistake of my life."

Carey Hollister smiled grimly. "So your memory improves! But you've got a lot to explain, Gerst. If you thought that stock was going to rise, *why* did you ride it for a fall? Don't ever try to tell me, or a jury, that you're the man to throw away a million dollars without a two-million-dollar reason. Give me the reason!"

A stir in the corridor jerked Gerst's eyes to the half-open door. He saw the policeman there, the nurse, a civilian with an open notebook and skittering pencil.

"What's this?" he rasped.

"State witnesses," Hollister said. "You don't need to say another word. You've put yourself in the electric chair already. Why, you fool, your very reaction to this market news convicts you of first degree murder. You find that instead of having lost a million dollars you've won a million, and you groan that it's all a mistake! Come, out with it, now—why did you kill Bevan?"

Andrew Gerst moistened his lips.

"Madness, all madness!" he desperately protested. "Bevan was one of my best friends You ought to know it."

"I?" Hollister shook his head. "I've seen the surface. But you're one who holds grudges, Gerst. All Wall Street knows that. You bide your time, you sometimes wait for years—but you get your man. What did you have against George Bevan?"

"Nothing!" cried Gerst.

"Trouble over—a woman?"

Gerst sat up straight in the bed. His jaw sagged.

"Let me," Hollister softly offered, "refresh your memory. Refresh it from some inside information of my own. My sister, as you know, married George Bevan. She learned about that woman who put you aside for Bevan, and she heard the whole story from him. She loved him enough to forgive him—and that was the last 'other woman' in his life.

"CHERCHEZ *la femme,* Gerst! The woman has been found. She will be another witness against you, a witness to establish a motive. Men whom you've ruined will testify that you smiled at them year after year until you found the time ripe to crush them. From the standpoint of the District Attorney's office, it's an open and shut case. First degree—"

"Stop!" shouted Gerst. "There's

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no first degree about it! The woman —yes, that's true. And it's true that there was bad blood over her. Yesterday she came into my mind, and I boiled over. But I didn't mean to shoot Bevan. I meant to thrash him. When I told him so, he reached for his hip. I believed he was going to draw a gun, and I shot in self-defense."

For a space Hollister sat in thought. He spoke quietly. "I'll make you a proposition, Gerst. For my sister's sake, for the sake of George Bevan's memory, I want to avoid scandal. Your plea of self-defense doesn't hold water, for Bevan carried no weapon; but the case is one which I feel justified in coming to an agreement out of court. If you choose to save the State the expense of a trial and will sign a plea of guilt, I offer you the alternative of life imprisonment. Otherwise—"

Andrew Gerst sank back on his pillow. He thought of that little brown door up the river, the door that convicted killers pass through in somber and endless procession, never to return. A shudder swept him.

"I'll sign," he whispered huskily. "I'll sign!"

His trembling fingers had traced that fatal signature when, a quarter hour later, Joel Markham strode into the room. He gave one swift glance to Hollister and approached the bed.

"Gerst," he snapped. "You made a deal in Heavy Industries yesterday!"

Andrew Gerst nodded.

"Y-yes. Hollister knows."

"For God's sake, give me a stop-loss order to rush down to the Street. You sold Heavy Industries short, and the market is going up by leaps and bounds. A merger's gone through!"

Gerst's eyes bulged at Markham and turned wildly to Carey Hollister. And again Hollister was smiling. "Quite true, old chap," he said. "All the tricks aren't confined to the Street. We people in the District Attorney's office know a few, too. This paper of mine—it's just a special one-copy edition that my friend, the managing editor of the *Standard*, obligingly ran off for me."

Markham wheeled.

"What? What?"

"It's a long story; I'll tell you later," Carey Hollister said, and nodded at Gerst. "Go ahead. Dash off that order. Money's good for something, after all—even up in Sing Sing. They let you buy cigarettes there, I believe."

That didn't interest Andrew Gerst. Wine and women were much in his line. But cigarettes were no solace. He had never learned to smoke.

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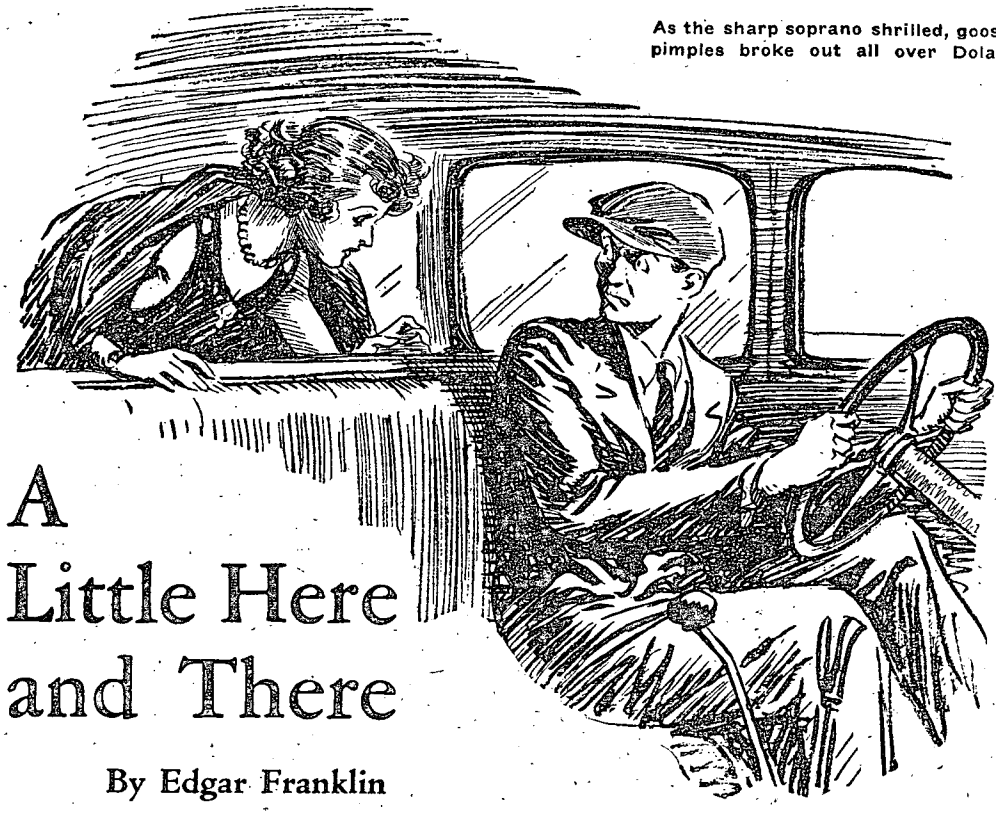

As the sharp soprano shrilled, goose pimples broke out all over Dolan

A Little Here and There

By Edgar Franklin

MR. JAMES (RED) BINNEY gave the final polish to the beer-pump handles of his modest little cellar saloon and meditatively considered that pug-nosed, extra-shabby, superlatively futile and ultra-superlatively dumb young criminal, Johnny Dolan.

MYSTERY F D W SHORT

Minutes now, since he had finished his second beer and discovered with considerable shock that his credit for a third was worthless, Johnny Dolan had been draped there in the one position near the center of the bar, stricken, mumbling, his right hand picking at the whiskers on his left sleeve. It got a person's goat.

A Bit of Champagne, a Smooth Limousine, a New Suit—and Dolan Was Willing to Cop a Half Million Dollars and Move into the Big-Time League!

"Aw, snap out of it!" Mr. Binney barked. "D'y' ever hear *me* bellyachin' like that?"

"Put me on your side o' the bar an' listen for the bellyachin'," Johnny Dolan sighed.

"Look, Johnny," Mr. Binney said, "will I tell you what's wrong wit' you, that you always have just ten cents less'n a dime in your pants an' go around lookin' like something the Department o' Sanitation would 'a' chucked in their wagon, only they didn't bring tongs?"

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Johnny Dolan glanced darkly at him.

"Leave a guy t' die o' thirst, if that's the kind o' pal you are," he muttered, "only don't dish out no pep talk!"

"This ain't pep talk. This is the same trouble many a good guy has had an' got cured," Mr. Binney pursued earnestly. "It's a matter o' seein' where you wanna go, but not havin' the speed t' get there, know what I mean? All the time you kid yourself you're gonna do this big job or that big job—an' what happens? Y'ain't got what it takes an' consequently somebody pulls the plug an' there goes *you,* down the pipe, wit'out a nickel! *Why?* On account of you're always tryin' t' bite through a three-rib roast, y' poor lob, when y'ain't got the teeth for a thin slice o' baloney. Look, John," said Mr. Binney, "take a tumble t' yourself an' try pickin' up just a *little* here an' a *little* there—small-time stuff that a small-time punk like you can get without breakin' a leg. There's always blind men wit' pennies in their cups an' little kids runnin' errands wit' maybe a quarter or a half a dollar in their mitts."

"Lissen, Red," Johnny Dolan began, with feeble resentment, "you took several quite dirty cracks at me there an'—"

"An' here's the other angle it seems y'ain't got the brains t' understand—nor nobody else, neither, if it comes t' that," Mr. Binney frowned. "I dunno what's the answer, but y'ain't like other boys, Johnny. What I mean, another slug'll open a box, clean it thorough an' go home t' sleep wit' the year's expenses under his pillow. But you even walk up to a box an' the damn' thing turns into a sea-serpent or somethin'. What I mean, John, you start somethin' an' you know in advance somethin' screwy's gonna happen to it, so why not figure—"

Just there the flow of reason suddenly stopped. Mr. Binney, his face quite expressionless, automatically swabbed at his bar and spoke softly from the corner of his mouth:

"Pipe the lug that just come in an' set down, John. English. Limey Larry, he says he's called. This is three times t'day he's here, askin' very cautious for somebody t' give a hand wit' a job, an' it seems he has his eye on *you.* Around five he was astin' your name, just when you went out, John, an'—hey! he's beckonin' you."

Johnny Dolan stared at the indicated lug, seated at one of the little tables across the room.

He was forty or so, skinny, amazingly well-dressed, with little sideburns and a keenly twinkling eye. He continued to beckon and, since a guy with clothes like that generally has the price of a beer in his pocket, Johnny Dolan shuffled over to the table.

The stranger's sharp eye looked him up and down swiftly, and he seemed satisfied.

"Dolan, isn't h'it? 'Ave a chair, Dolan. Open for a bit o' work, if h'it pays? Fine!" Here he turned and bawled at Mr. Binney: "'Ave you champagne, properly iced?"

"Domestic?" Mr. Binney inquired, with a start.

"Imported!"

"A pint, huh?" Mr. Binney queried, when he had caught his breath.

"A quart!" the stranger said, and turned back to Johnny Dolan.

Johnny Dolan gulped. Repeatedly he had seen people drink champagne; that was about all. Yet here came Red, with a big bottle all wrapped in a clean bar-towel and a couple of large, flat glasses; and plop! went the cork and fine, fizzly foam filled them. Johnny Dolan, having drained his with one cap-

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able gulp, sat back and blinked. Mr. Binney moved away, rather as if in a dream. The stranger filled Johnny's glass again.

"Dolan, lad, you're game to take big chances for big returns? Good! Then listen very careful h'and give me your answer, yes or no, for we've none too much time. Call me Larry; the less you know h'about me, the better for h'all of h'us, an' that'll 'ave to go for the job itself, too."

"An' is this job somepin I'd wanna tie up wit'?" Johnny Dolan inquired, for with the second fizzly glass he was inclined to airiness.

THE stranger glanced about and then leaned across the table, and his penetrating eye jabbed through Johnny Dolan.

"Judge for yourself, Dolan," he whispered. "This night we're taking *the best part of a million dollars!* Do your h'end well and you'll get the fifth part of h'it!"

"I—I should 'a' stuck t' beer!" Johnny Dolan croaked hoarsely, as the spinning of the room slowed down.

"Aye, a matter h'of a million dollars, h'and most h'of h'it h'in h'actual money," the impossible Larry hurtled on. "H'arsk no questions just now, matey. Your part's to drive a car h'exactly h'as h'ordered. *H'exactly!* 'Ere! Watch careful!" He snatched out a pencil and went to work on the back of a beer-stained bill of fare. "East Seventy-first Street—'e r e. Lexington H'Avenue—'ere. There's a chemist's shop h'about 'ere. H'and 'ere, h'on Seventy-first, h'about fifty feet from the corner, is a black Iscolla limousine. Got it, lad?"

"I got it!" Johnny Dolan agreed dizzily.

"It's not quite seven now. H'at a quarter to eight, you'll be 'ere by the chemist's. Walk slowly h'east, h'around the corner. I'll meet you. I shan't recognize you, be sure, h'and you'll give no sign of knowing me; but h'if I scratch my nose while passing you, step h'into the car h'at once. 'Ere's a set of keys, by the way. H'if I don't scratch my nose, follow me at a distance for a square or two h'and I'll give you further instructions. Still with me, Dolan?"

"Still wit' you, pal," said Johnny enthusiastically. The more he looked at this mug, the better the whole thing smelled. Class, y'understand! Not only Larry's clothes, but his hands—white and soft and slim. You could see the guy never done an honest day's work in his life!

"H'as to the driving h'itself. H'over to Riverside and then directly north, like this." He sketched the route on the bill of fare. "There'll likely be a large, light blue roadster behind you, Dolan. One of the mob, lad. Give no 'eed to 'im. Keep 'im behind—that's h'all. Now 'ere we go, h'on through Yonkers h'and right 'ere you swing right h'and then left again, h'into the by-road. Straight north again, for a matter h'of seven miles or so. Go a bit slow 'ere. You'll see two huge white marble gateposts h'at the right, h'and a small sign, 'Idlewold.' I'll write that down 'ere, Dolan—Idlewold. *Stop!* The blue roadster'll then run up close beside you."

"Keep goin', sucker!" Johnny Dolan urged, with deepest interest.

The stranger smiled brilliantly, mysteriously and poured Johnny Dolan's third glass.

"That's really h'all for the moment. The Big Fellow's there h'and the stuff's 'ard by, lad. The Big Fellow 'imself will tell you what to do next. But 'ere,

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Dolan, is the great point of it h'all: once started, let nothing stop you. *Nothing,* h'understand! Make time. If the Iscolla'll do ninety; h'if she'll do a 'undred, do a 'undred. But keep h'on on h'on till you get to them gates, no matter what 'appens."

"An' what'd happen?" Johnny Dolan demanded truculently, as the third glass swirled pleasantly through him.

"Oh—this or that. One can't really say," Larry murmured evasively. "For one thing, the Queer One's apt to pop up anywhere in a job like this."

"The *who?*"

"Just the Big Fellow's kid sister, a pretty little piece but—well, demented, if one must say it. Religious mania, I fawncy. Mad about honesty, virtue and all that rot. She's forever h'interfering h'and scheming to 'ead the Big Fellow straight. If she does turn up, 'ere or there or in whatever way, Dolan, take her aboard h'and keep 'er aboard, h'and pay no attention to a word she says. She's 'armless, h'at least. H'if she carries h'on h'and tries to stop you, scare her thorough; she scares quite h'easy. But whatever you do, be sure to keep 'er with you till you turn 'er h'over to the Big Fellow, for h'if h'ever you 'urt a 'air of 'er 'ead, 'e'd slice off your liver with a butcher's knife!"

Larry leaned back, spreading his palms, beaming at Johnny Dolan.

"Well, there it is, lad — merely a matter h'of letting nothing, not h'even the devil 'imself, stop you, once you're started. I may say you've been recommended very 'igh for work h'of this type, Dolan. H'are you h'on?"

Scowling at him, Johnny Dolan tried to get it . . . Lissen! For a start, this was all happening, *absolutely!* What he meant, he wasn't coked or dreaming it, he was hearing it. The fizzle water had nothing to do with it, on account of it took at least a quart of Red Binney's hell-fire bar whisky to give Johnny Dolan the first light jolt. And not only was he nearing it, but it sounded perfectly natural and reasonable. What he meant, it seemed he had at last been picked out as an ace by some very swell mob for some very swell job — *and why not?*

"Gimme a nickel for the subway, buddy!" he said suddenly, nonchalantly. "I got nothin' smaller'n a ten-spot."

The character known as Limey Larry spun a coin across the table, glanced at his watch and sipped his champagne. Johnny Dolan floated, rather than actually walked, toward the door, but at the foot of the steps he pulled up with an abrupt jerk and, wheeling about, looked along his nose at Mr. Binney.

"The pennies outen a blind man's cup, hey? Haw! haw! haw! haw!" he bellowed derisively. "The pennies outen a blind man's cup, says you! Well, *nuts to you,* says me! Haw! haw! haw! haw! haw!"

II

TO Johnny Dolan, this delightful evening, the whole world seemed to smile.

The full moon, just climbing in the eastern sky, seemed to smile benignly on him. The cop on the corner seemed to smile as Johnny Dolan wafted dreamily past, and it was all but impossible not to poke the blue paunch with a grubby forefinger and to inquire how was tricks. The fat lady in the summery print seemed to smile and, only for the cop, Johnny Dolan would have obeyed that impulse and have resoundingly smacked her bare back.

And there, as he drifted around the corner, beyond the apartment house entrance and heading west, stood the Iscolla—and was that some car! Eight

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thousand fish that bus had stood somebody and it could easy be, Johnny Dolan reflected whimsically, that before the week was out he'd go buy one for himself. Yeah, and if they put out ten-thousand-dollar bills, he'd chuck one at the guy that sold it to him and tell him to go buy lollipops for his kids with the change!

Everything seemed to be working out nicely up here.

The limey, that is to say, was coming along the block not twenty feet away. And here was a laugh! Them foreign crooks have no nerve. What Johnny meant, you could see this Larry guy was all excited and jittery, now the job was about to break. He was sort of red and he looked excited, and now, for some reason, he ran a finger around under his collar. After that, though, visibly pulling himself together, he stared blankly across the street and, raising one hand, scratched his nose.

As if he had been stepping into such cars since birth, Johnny Dolan got out his keys, stepped into the Iscolla and started the engine.

What was it the ads said about this job? Oh, yeah, "You ride on air in an Iscolla." Well, there was certainly nothing phony about *that* crack, Johnny mused happily as he sped along. You went over car tracks, and there were no car tracks; you drove over a hunk of board, and not so much as a quiver came up to you. So he'd been walking on air before and now he was riding on air; Johnny Dolan chuckled richly over this conceit for several blocks, until the chuckle somehow ran down of its own accord and left him faintly scowling.

Also, it seemed he was now kind of sad inside and his head ached slightly. He sat up and managed to start the chuckle again. A guy with two hundred grand waiting for him at the end of this ride, getting sad! *Two hundred grand!* Why, with two hundred grand you take yourself a couple of trips around the world and you buy yourself one of them swell old castles on the Rhine down in Russia, or wherever it is, for a hide-out, telling the peasants you're a big butter-and-egg man from Texas and—Johnny nodded suddenly as he glanced into the mirror.

Everything was still working out: hanging almost on his rear bumper was a large, light-blue roadster. Well—keep it behind, the limey had suggested. Johnny Dolan giggled faintly and jabbed his accelerator down to the floor and, having whizzed across New York City's northern line, glanced back again. He was behind, all right. He was out of sight.

And now dear old Yonkers was behind as well and, swinging right, he'd get into the back road Larry had indicated. He found it readily enough and shot blithely into darker, lonelier stretches; and since he was doing a mere ninety now, it seemed fitting to experiement a bit with the riding-on-air proposition. A small rock appeared and Johnny Dolan went over it, but there were no bounces for this car in a rock that size. *There,* however, a fine young boulder stuck out into the road and Johnny Dolan hit that squarely and also hit the top of the car himself and—

"Petey! *Pete!*" a sharp soprano voice shrilled just behind him. "What's—what's the matter with—*aaaaah!*"

So profoundly startled that his disreputable cap flew off and goose pimples broke out all over him, Johnny yanked his foot from the accelerator and whirled about.

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Wherever the hell she'd been, wherever the hell she'd come from, a dame was there all right — a quite pretty, quite blond kid in a quite nifty silk dress, on her knees in the back of the car. Now she was climbing up to the rear seat, and a black lap robe was slipping off her, as if she'd been asleep down there. It was—because it had to be, as Johnny Dolan understood after the first shock—the Queer One!.

She was frightened, too. Her hands were clasped tight and her big eyes were popping at Johnny Dolan.

"You—you—you stole this car!" she gasped. "You stop at once and get out of it or—or—"

Johnny Dolan sighed. There was them that called him dumb, but, give him credit, when he had to think fast he could think quite fast. The way this doll looked, she was now about to scream and maybe bust out a couple of windows, and they had no time for that stuff. Scare her, the limey had suggested.

"Lissen, sister!" Johnny Dolan snarled horribly, his jaw thrust out, his whole face fiendishly contorted. "How'd'ja like t' get cut in six pieces an' them pieces get chucked into the ditch, huh? Then, wherever you was before, lay down there again an' *shut up!*"

SHE was now, he assumed, quite correctly, scared. At any rate, with a thin, terrified scream, she had covered her eyes and collapsed in a little huddle on the back seat. He smiled pleasantly and, sending the Iscolla to ninety again, cocked an eye for the "Idlewold" gate posts.

They loomed up in his headlights now and, braking hard, he stopped just beside them. So—what was it happened next here? Oh, yeah. The light blue roadster would pull up beside him. Only it seemed there was no blue roadster just yet.

Johnny Dolan stared through the back window. There were no lights behind; but nothing had happened to the Big Fellow's sister, anyway. She was sitting bolt upright now, staring at the Idlewold sign as if unable to believe her eyes. The eyes, then, switched about and blazed at Johnny Dolan.

"All right, then! You *didn't* steal this car, did you?" she hissed. "But you did kidnap me, and if I don't have you sent up for life—"

"Lady, you got it all wrong," Johnny broke in tolerantly. "I'm the new boy; that's why y'ain't never see me before. What I mean, I just got took into the mob."

"You got *what?*"

"The Big Feller's mob, kid—your brother's mob."

The girl leaned forward and examined him.

"Pardon me," she said, "but is this an act or are you crazy?"

"Aw, lady, people like you always get that idea about all the other guys," Johnny Dolan answered sadly. "It's—aw, skip it."

On account it was a shame, the poor little frill sitting there with her hand pressed to her forehead, which probably ached like a sore tooth... Now she was steaming up again! She was getting mad. She was running her tongue along her lips and new fire was in her eye.

"*He put something in that good-bye cocktail!*" she exploded. "Something to make me sleep; and when I hid on the floor here I went to sleep and—where *is* Mr. George Ransome, by the way?" she asked with dreadful sweetness. "Up there in his house? He

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didn't even have the nerve to kidnap me himself, did he?"

Although his very heart was wrung, Johny Dolan hitched about and spoke firmly:

"Lissen, baby, if it was only me I'd sit here an' play knock-knock, or whatever this game is, with you till Christmas; but it so happens the Big Feller has a very heavy job on tonight; an' while Larry said you positively mustn't get hurted—"

"Larry? Larry? What Larry?" the girl asked quickly. "You don't mean Lawrence?"

"If his name was that, they'd probably call him Larry."

"Wait! Wait! I believe I'm getting it!" the Queer One cried breathlessly. "This Larry you're talking about—is he a man about forty, dark and thin, with a Cockney accent and little side-whiskers and a terribly, terribly humorous eye? *He is?*" The lovely young person came nearer. "Then you, whoever *you* are, tell me exactly when, where and how you met this Larry and what he said and why you think you're here."

Not to kid himself that he was a doctor, or anything like that, Johnny Dolan at least knew that you have to humor these cases.

He told her briefly, making the mere theft of a million dollars sound as innocuous as possible and certainly not stressing the note that she herself was mentally unbalanced—but, at that, it seemed he was exciting her. Her eyes snapped more and more wickedly, her bosom rose and fell, her full lips compressed. When he had quite finished, she sat there for many seconds, breathing hard.

"Lawrence! George's priceless Lawrence!" she spat out, and Johnny Dolan understood that she was talking mostly to herself. "George's demon valet! The master mind—the extra brain, when George needs one, he calls Lawrence. And when doesn't he need one! Lawrence, the fountain of unique ideas! Lawrence, who has the answer to *everything!*" Now, remotely, she spoke to Johny Dolan. "Peter has told his man Simms and Simms has told Lawrence and—oh, *hell!*" she screamed, and it was enough to make even a hard-boiled guy like Johnny Dolan sit down and cry. So young, so pretty and still so completely nutty. Positively, he had no more idea what she was talking about than the poor kid had herself. Now she was at it once again.

"You said you got into this car at quarter to eight. Are you sure of the time?"

"There was a clock in the drug-store."

"There wasn't a very large, blond man in or near the car, was there?"

"Absolutely not, lady!" Johnny said soothingly. "All the guys in that neighborhood was quite small. I noticed it particularly. You got nothin' t' worry about."

But even again he had started her off, and this time worse than ever! The poor goofy kid oozed a fury almost beyond bounds.

"Then he was late even for *that!*" she panted, eyes dilating. "He's always late. He'll be ten hours late for his own funeral! We pushed the time ahead from eight to half-past seven—that's one thing at least Lawrence did not discover!—and *still* he was late!" She stopped. She looked to Johnny Dolan like she was now trying to control herself. Except you knew that, being crazy, she could not think, you would have said she was thinking very rapid. But it only made her that much

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battier! Her flaming eyes were on Johnny Dolan again.

"*All right!*" she cried. "Then I'll marry *you!*"

III

TOTALLY unequipped for the lightning assimilation of new ideas, in this extraordinary moment Johnny Dolan did grasp one thing: even with a couple of hundred grand in the old sock, even figuring she was the Big Fellow's sister, a person would be very foolish to marry a nut.

It seemed that somehow this poor little moll had now got that way about him; and while another guy with different principles might have taken advantage of that—Johnny Dolan drew back a few inches. The lady's mad passion had now waxed to a point where she was leaning on the back of the front seat, not a foot from him, and speaking directly into his face:

"Scarecrow, you said your name was Dolan, didn't you?" she demanded savagely. "Well, from the look of you, you have about a four-year-old I. Q., but you'll have to grapple with this and get it. Dolan, they've taken you for a ride. I haven't any brother, there isn't any Big Fellow, as you call him, there isn't any mob and there isn't any million dollars. He must have been dropped on his head when a child and he ought to be writing movies now instead of pressing clothes, but your Larry is merely George Ransome's valet. At a guess, I'll say he paid Simms about ten dollars for Pete's spare set of keys, and at another guess I'll say he picked *you* because you were the only thing he could find in human shape dumb enough."

"Poor kid!" Johnny Dolan breathed; now she didn't even know she had a brother!

"Dolan, there *must* be something in that head of yours that works! Won't you please try to start it going?" the girl begged. "I'll make it so simple. Dolan, you've read about fool wills? Well, my Uncle Ben made one. I'm his sole heiress, if I'm married, satisfactorily to myself, before I'm twenty-one, and I'll be twenty-one tomorrow. I got back from England last night—you've heard about England?—and I was to have married Peter Wendel this morning. But Peter was late as usual!" she said through gritting teeth. "He was delayed till this afternoon in Philadelphia.

"You *are* getting it, aren't you?" she hoped aloud. "Well, here's the only other thing you have to understand. George Ransome. He has been trying to marry me for months. He swore that, come hell or high water, he'd keep me from marrying Peter. I cannot stop now to tell you all the fiendish tricks he's played. But to make dead sure of evading him at the last moment, Peter and I planned that I should hide in Peter's car, this car, an hour ahead of the time we meant to start and—and then we'd elope. And then I was ass enough to have one goodbye cocktail with George. . . . You *do* get the general idea, don't you?" she asked breathlessly, and dabbed her forehead with a little handkerchief.

"Absolutely, kid!" Johnny Dolan said reassuringly.

"So George and his blue roadster are somewhere around and for a final guess I'll say that he's to rescue me from you and probably hold me here until tomorrow, when I can marry him or lose a million dollars. *Now* do you know why I'm marrying *you*, Dolan? Oh, don't think things! We'll part at the Grand Central and tomorrow I'll

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send you a check for a thousand dollars and whatever papers you have to sign for the annulment. And the *next* time Pete Wendel's late—" She boiled up suddenly. "Well, never mind that just now. Drive in there to the house, Dolan. I'm damned if I'll marry a scarecrow!"

A dim, dim suspicion filtered into Johnny Dolan's mind. This dame was certainly talking in bunches—yes. But, at that, she didn't sound so batty. What he meant, while it was impossible that any limey could kid a smart number like Johnny Dolan, at the same time—

"You haven't a blushing bride tucked away somewhere, have you?" the girl clipped off tartly.

"No, lady, only—"

"Then drive on to the house, I tell you! We haven't all night. There's a justice of the peace in the village and *—drive to the house!*"

With a grunt, Johnny Dolan started his engine and rolled up to the house, a couple of hundred feet along the drive. It was quite a large, oldish house with big verandas and softly lighted. The moll seemed to know it, too; anyhow, she let off a snarling little squeal of rage at the sight of it.

"Dolan, you're a tough little rat, aren't you?" she seethed, as she opened the car door and stepped out. "Well, if George Ransome's waiting for me in there, sock him just one for me, and if you knock him cold I'll give you an extra hundred dollars. Be careful, though; he's a rather expert boxer. *Come on!*"

She motioned imperiously; and now, to be sure, Johnny Dolan, in a daze, was on the veranda beside her and she was pressing a button and tapping her foot angrily.

"Well, *Miss Muriel!*" a plump little gray-haired butler cried amazedly, as he opened the door.

"None other, Jepps," the girl said brightly. "Is Mr. George at home?"

"Why, he's not, Miss Upton, although I'm expecting him some time during the evening. He phoned late this afternoon that he'd probably—"

"He will. Jepps, do something for me. This chap here, Mr. Dolan, is going to—er—work for me and I want to get him into some decent clothes at once. He's about the size of Mr. Henry Ransome, isn't he? Can you fix him up with a suit, and so on? I'll square it, if there's a row."

The butler's beaming smile faded as he surveyed Johnny Dolan and his wardrobe. His expression was that of one who surveys an overflowing garbage pail on the curb.

"Er—why, yes, I think so, Miss Upton," he murmured. "Er—this way, Mr. Dolan, if you please?"

After that, the sheer goofiness of the whole performance engulfed Johnny Dolan.

Head swimming, he found himself in a bedroom slightly smaller than Penn Station. Jepps, eyes averted, nose in air, walked with plump majesty to a clothes-press, considered some forty suits on their hangers and finally selected a neat gray outfit. Silent still, he produced a real shirt and a tie and a pair of shoes and even a hat, and laid them on the huge four-poster.

"You'll not need assistance in dressing, sir!" he stated icily, and gathering up the silver toilet set on the bureau, walked out with it in his arms.

THERE was a real bathroom, with soap and hot water, and since he had, oddly enough, shaved that very morning, Johnny Dolan merely washed his face and slicked his hair.

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Then, gibbering to himself, he dressed. Most of the things fitted pretty well, too, and having hustled into them, he gave himself the once-over in the long mirror.

And, standing there, Johnny Dolan suddenly stiffened and began to tremble; his eyes opened and sweat stood out upon his forehead; nor was there anything remarkable about this, *for in the Dolan brain an idea was being born!*

Lissen! Some slug said that clothes make the man, or something like that, didn't he? Okay! Well, then, this guy in the mirror wasn't Johnny Dolan, the punk, no more! Absolutely not! This guy in the gray suit, with the gray hat cocked over one eye, was one o' these absolutely top-notch master-criminals you read about! And so what? *So what,* says you? So this dumb little frill downstairs was paying him to marry her, to save her dough and also to work out a grudge against the slow-moving guy who'd ditched her.

And there was what put you in stitches: *to save her dough!* Let her get married to him before her temper cooled off and she saw things straight again, and she thought she'd send him one lousy grand and some papers to sign, huh? Well, lissen! If she was getting a million bucks, the way she said, the one-half of that would go to Johnny Dolan before he signed even the first o' them papers!

He mopped his brow on one of the ten fine linen handkerchiefs he had taken from the drawer. This had been a long time coming; he'd pulled quite some boners in his day, but here at last was something to write home about. Here at last was a real crime!

The way she seemed, when he hurried downstairs, the jane was even more furious than when he went upstairs. She was walking back and forth, her bosom still heaving, her eyes still flaming. She stopped and looked him over critically.

"Nothing can take the edge off that face, can it?" she said pleasantly. "However—so much the better! Dolan, I've just had an inspiration. As soon as we're married, I'll phone the papers; we'll take the first train into town and they'll have cameras at the Grand Central when we arrive; and if *that* doesn't jolt Mr. Peter Wendel, when he reads the morning paper—Dolan, come along!"

The fat butler looked as if he was going to have some kind of fit. Johnny Dolan snickered contentedly as the girl herself threw open the front door. A dame in a rage like that couldn't cool off inside of an hour at least. It was in the bag!

"Why, *George!*" Miss Upton cried, as steps thumped up to the veranda just before them. "Something delayed you?"

George, a wiry little fellow obviously of the upper classes, was more or less in a state. Just once he glanced at Johnny Dolan.

"I—I had a blowout!" he confessed. "I heard that you'd been abducted and—"

"Save it, George," the girl said dryly. "Dolan has told it all."

"Has he? All right, then, Muriel, I had you brought here. I did it to save you from yourself, from marrying Wendel," George said, quite brazenly and very energetically. "I've told you again and again that you'll marry me, honey—"

He kept on for quite a while in the same strain. Johnny Dolan got it after a few seconds: the large light-blue roadster was standing there at the foot of the steps. Johnny Dolan nodded and

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drew breath; it seemed, unless the party was to get spoiled, he would probably have to sock this little guy, after all.

"Lissen, punk—" he began ferociously, stepping forward—but there he stopped, just as George stopped, and, like George and Muriel, he stared down the drive. A heavy car, cut-out wide open, was banging toward them from the highway; headlights burst suddenly into view, brakes shrieked and wheels slid in the gravel.

And before them stood one of the largest gentlemen Johnny Dolan had ever seen. He was blond and rather disheveled; he, too, was in a state. His teeth gritted audibly as he leaped up the steps, his great chest rose and fell.

"P-Peter!" Miss Upton said faintly.

"Yes, I'm here!" the giant barked, rather superfluously. "I choked Simms and got the right of it out of him before I fired him, Muriel. Ransome's maniac valet cooked up the plot that landed you here."

"You—were late—" Miss Upton faltered.

"Sorry," the big man said, and let it go at that and turned his whole attention to the smaller person named Ransome. Fists on his hips, he glowered fiercely downward. "Ransome," he thundered, "first and last, you've pulled some pretty rough tricks, but this insane thing passes all human endurance. I've never beaten up a little rat in all my life, but I'm going to give you a lesson now you'll remember to your dying day!"

"Not really?" Mr. Ransome smiled, and raised his brows.

"*Really!*" roared the big man, and with the flat of his mighty hand he slapped Mr. Ransome bodily from the veranda and to his knees on the grass.

He was up, Johnny Dolan noted admiringly, in a split second, even as the big fellow bounded after him. Miss Upton screamed faintly:

"Pete! Be careful! He's an awfully good boxer, you know, and he might—*oh!*"

This last was occasioned by Mr. Ransome's left uppercut, which met Peter Wendel's chin squarely and sent his whole huge bulk tottering backward for a dozen steps. But with the howl of a maddened tiger he was hurtling forward again and—

"Hey! This is quite some mill!" Johnny Dolan said appreciatively.

It was indeed. They had met with a crash and traded punches for several seconds—and Mr. Wendel's head had rocked—and now Mr. Ransome's head was rocking—and *now* they were down, with Ransome on top and hammering — no, it was Wendel on top now and— No, it was Ransome on top and—hey! This was wonderful! It was nobody on top, on account of they were both on their feet again.

"Dolan! Go in there and stop it!" the girl cried.

"Absolutely, lady," Johnny Dolan assented. "Git me a suit o' armor an' a Tommy gun first."

"Dolan, you must! A—a creature like you must know all manner of tricks. Do anything you like, no matter what it is—to Ransome, I mean—before he can hurt Peter. Here, Dolan!"

Shaking hands opened her bag. She snatched out a bill and thrust it at him, and with a sigh Johnny Dolan poked it into his pocket and shuffled down the steps.

On account of, naturally, he did know a few tricks. First off, he'd have to get near enough to Ransome to poke out a couple of his eyes. He moved forward cautiously, considering the

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gladiators. They were going something elegant! Somebody's coat had ripped up the back, somebody's necktie was flying through the air.

Johnny Dolan stepped in a little closer, reached tentatively for Ransome and missed. But they'd both noticed him at the same second. There was the briefest little pause in the battle as two astonished, infuriated faces jerked toward him, as two clenched fists, one huge, one rather small, were drawn back.

Then, materializing out of nowhere, two locomotives hit Johnny Dolan—one on each eye.

IV

THE full moon still smiled down benignly from its high position in the heavens.

Lying there on his back on the grass, Johnny Dolan blinked uncomprehendingly at the moon for a long time—blinked, and found the blinking difficult, because both eyes were nearly closed now. Also, it seemed that somebody must have knocked his head off bodily and put it on crooked, the way it felt.

Slowly and with great difficulty he sat up. The house was at a considerable distance, two maids and a chauffeur in the doorway, peering out into the moonlit night. Near it Jepps, the butler, was assisting Mr. Ransome to his feet.

"He—must have—picked up a club, Jepps," Mr. Ransome was saying thickly. "Where—is he? Where's Wendel?"

"Well, I fear, sir, they've gone to be married," the butler answered. "In fact, they started away quite a few minutes before I got you conscious again, sir, and . . ."

The door closed on them.

Johnny Dolan still blinked. It was all coming back now. The doll had slipped him something to stop the fight, a fin probably. He felt in his pocket and drew it out. It was a century, but he only stared morosely at it, for when a party has been about to take five hundred grand even a century does not look so hot.

Still, you can buy many cakes with a hundred dollars. As he found and donned his nice new hat, Johnny Dolan began to revive. It seemed, however, that the evening was a bust; he sat there moodily reflecting that Red Binney might be right and that his speed was picking up a little here and there and—*huh?* Johnny Dolan squinted through the slits that were his eyes and finally picked up the little glittering thing. It was a very handsome wrist watch, the strap not even broken. He put it on.

And if there was that, there could be more. Slowly, interest waxing, he crawled on. A quarter! Another quarter and three dimes! And over here—Mr. Dolan suddenly sat on the grass again and opened the wallet he had just picked up. It might be Mr. Ransome's pocket money or it might be Mr. Wendel's honeymoon expenses, but even in the moonlight he could see that it was all tens and twenties.

Rising hurriedly, he threw away the wallet. He never used one. The corners keep poking you.

THE sable Alabaman who did porter work in Mr. Binney's little saloon stood aside respectfully as the handsomely dressed stranger, hat well pulled down over his eyes, stepped in and crossed to the bar. Mr. Binney himself, at the sight of all the gray elegance, put on his company smile and demanded, "What'll it be, sir?"

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The stranger glanced at his wrist-watch.

"Have you any champagne, properly iced?" he inquired.

"Have I—what's that y' said?" he muttered, and caught himself. "Y' gotta excuse me, sir," he continued apologetically. "Couple o' seconds there your voice kind o' reminded me of a bum we got hangin' around here most of the time and—"

He drew in his breath with a thin wheeze and gripped the bar, for the stranger had stripped a one-hundred-dollar note from his roll and tossed it carelessly toward Mr. Binney.

Then, snatching off his hat, Johnny Dolan gaily guffawed:

"Surprise, y' poor slug! Surprise! An' so I'm a—" He stopped, gaping. In the most astonishing way, Mr. James (Red) Binney had disappeared and from the floor behind the bar came a heavy thud. "Hey, Sam!" Johnny Dolan gasped. "Git ice water or somethin'! It seems your boss has fainted!"

Clues from a Walk

THE dust clue-hunters have developed their science to a high degree of perfection. Dr. Locard has many faithful disciples of the branch of criminal detection in France and throughout the world. One of the most enthusiastic is his colleague, Dr. Parisot, who not very long ago undertook to prove that reading dust clues from the dust was truly a science.

He sent a man to take a walk on a rainy day. This man was told to keep his journey a secret, and to return to Dr. Parisot's laboratory after he had completed his walk. As soon as he returned he removed his shoes and gave them to Dr. Parisot.

Dr. Parisot, upon examining the shoes, found different kinds of mud. 1. An argillous yellow layer, mixed with small particles of lime. 2. A black mud, of rather fine consistency, gluey and containing vegetable dust. In this mud were also small pieces of wood, straw and dried leaves. 3. On the uppermost portion of the heel was a coating of gray dust, which proved to be made up of carbon mixed with red brick dust. 4. The outside layer of mud was similar in compositon to number 2.

The findings were sufficient to tell Dr. Parisot the route taken by the man. The yellow layer of mud came from Olry Park. The black dust was from a road which had been repaved with stones of a color found only in suburban boulevards.

The presence of seeds of the plane trees was an indication that the road was bordered by plane trees. The small fragments of wood, freshly carved was indicative of the fact that the trees in this avenue had been pruned recently.

The next layer of dust on the shoes, the gray carbon material, were particles of slag, such as is found in heaps on the path along the Marne Canal to the Rhine. Finally, the black mud on the uppermost part of the heel came from the Labu Boulevarde. With the aid of a map, Dr. Parisot was able to construct the precise path the walker had taken.

—*Edward Podolsky.*

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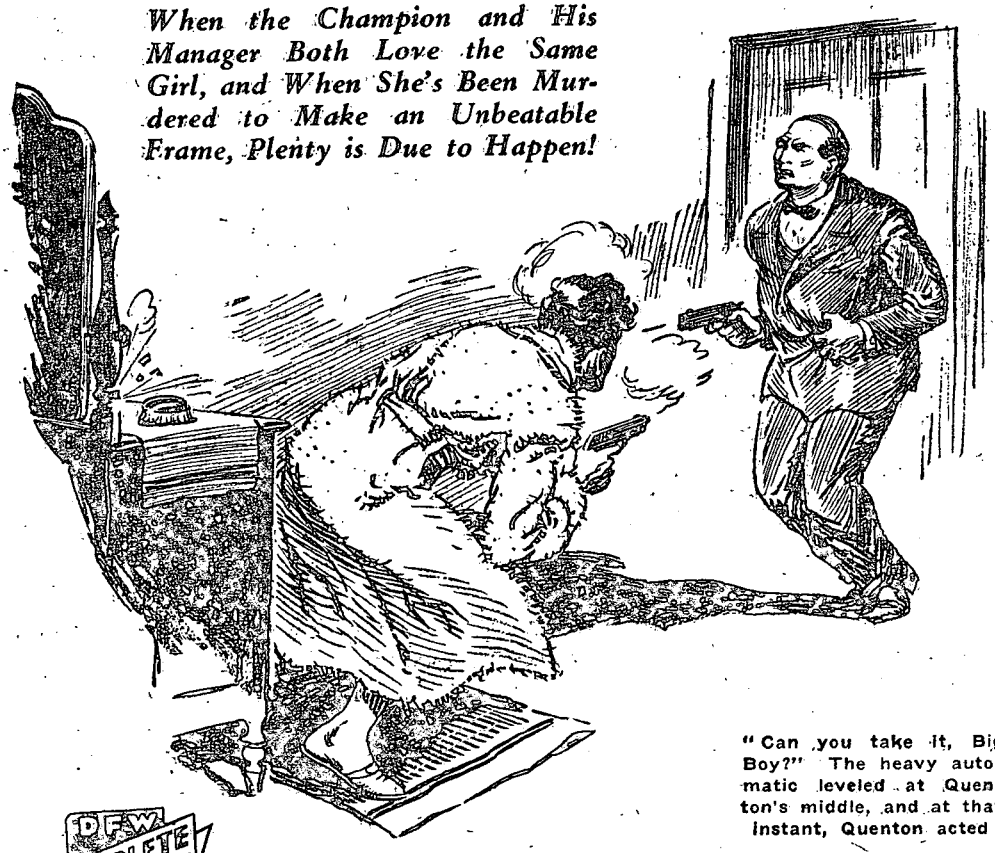
When the Champion and His Manager Both Love the Same Girl, and When She's Been Murdered to Make an Unbeatable Frame, Plenty is Due to Happen!



"Can you take it, Big Boy?" The heavy automatic leveled at Quenton's middle, and at that instant, Quenton acted

NEW COMPLETE NOVELETTE

Odds *Against the* Champion

By Nels Leroy Jorgensen

CHAPTER I

Framed by Experts

A MAN standing at the bar of *Jack Dempsey's,* across the street from the Garden, was slapping the latest sporting edition with one hand while he held the paper in the other.

Nick Quenton heard him say to the man beside him: "Wha' d'you want, anyway? The odds right now are six to five—and against the champ. I'm willing to bet good money that by the time the bell rings they'll be two to one!"

A satellite on the man's left raised eyebrows and a cocktail glass in the same movement and murmured: "*Against* the champ?"

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"That's what I said." The first speaker glowered along the bar length and looked aggressive.

Quenton folded up his own news sheet, reached for his change, frowned and went out. In the street again he paused for only an instant to search his newspaper for the last time.

He did not turn to the sporting pages. Instead, he followed through a news story that began on the first page and carried over to the second. It was the story of a murder that had taken place during the early morning hours of that same day.

A night club singer, Dolly Lafitte of the Club *Bimini*, had been murdered in her own apartment. The gun that had killed her was still missing—a .22. But the police had angles. The usual thing. An arrest was possible within twelve hours.

Quenton lit a cigarette. Smoke wisped from his wide, rather good-looking mouth, caused him to squint gray, narrow-lidded eyes. He pushed his hands into his pockets and stared across the Avenue at the bulk of the Garden. Outside there electric bulbs that had not yet been lighted gave the legend:

TONIGHT:
"Midshipman Dave" Harmon, Light-Heavyweight Champion of the World
VS.
"Tar-Baby" Munn, Former Champion

He had not needed to glance at that announcement in order to reassure himself. In fact, Nick Quenton knew the legend well. He had come back to New York—his home town—from Albany expressly for the promised championship battle. And his money was on the champion.

Quenton was not a frequent spectator at the Garden. His work held him mostly in Albany. But at the moment the particular background had aroused his interest.

Quenton's work had attached him to the staff of the New York State Attorney General's office. That was official. But his talents, as undercover man for the department, had caused him to be switched from the routine work of the office to cases covering professional sports in the state. Racetracks, wrestling, boxing—even professional hockey and professional football—were in his department. And he was able to handle them.

He was murmuring, as he threaded his way automatically across the avenue:

"*Against* the champ! And the odds still bearing down. Now I wonder—I just wonder what it all has to do with the murder of Dolly Lafitte of the *Bimini?*"

One angle of the whole betting situation he could understand without any need for a map. If the odds were, at this so very late hour, so heavily against Midshipman Dave Harmon, the "wise money" had appeared because of something in which Harmon's manager was concerned. All of Broadway, all of the sporting world, knew that Harmon, while an excellent fighter, was lost without his manager in his corner at every fight. Someone had jested that Harmon wouldn't even lead with a left unless Steve Cotton told him to.

THAT way, it left little to be wondered about. Because all of Broadway had known that Steve Cotton and Dolly Lafitte had been close. More than that—Cotton's money paid for Dolly's sables, and his name was signed to the checks that maintained her small apartment. But Broadway is Broadway

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and Cotton's business and his relaxations were his own affairs.

But now the torch singer of the Club *Bimini* was dead—murdered—and the odds against the champion were mounting with each passing hour.

"It adds up too blamed neatly!" Quenton growled.

The meeting tonight was distinctly a "grudge" fight. Quenton knew that. It had not taken the newspaper ballyhoo to convince him.

A retired manufacturer by the name of "Ozzie" Osterman was nominally the owner of the challenger and his stable. Bert "Tar-Baby" Munn, the challenger, was a Georgia "cracker" who had once held the division championship. He had retained the crown for two years, until clean-living, handsome young "Midshipman Dave" Harmon had come out of the U. S. Navy, after winning a championship there, and had proceeded to topple him from the throne.

After that, for a year and a half, the Midshipman had defended his title with a series of three clean-cut victories, two of them knockouts. At the end of that time his manager, Steve Cotton, had allowed himself to be persuaded into a return bout with the ex-champion.

That last battle, which had taken place during the winter in Miami, had been a bitter one. For ten rounds it had gone on as most light-heavyweight battles go; then the last five rounds had provided the thrill-hungry fight audience with all the savagery it had ever hoped to see. Even so, the fight had ended in a draw—an unsatisfactory decision to most of the fans.

Harmon was still champion, but the fight public had had its way. The contest tonight was intended to settle the question once and for all time. The "Tar-Baby" was after blood—and so were his backers.

Nobody had ever given much thought to Osterman regarding the ownership of "Tar-Baby." Broadway—and Quenton—knew the real owner was Jake Baruch, Broadway and Palm Beach gambling czar, proprietor of night clubs, racing stable owner, reputed to be the boss of a mighty gambling organization.

It was Jake Baruch whose money rode on "Tar-Baby" in this night's fight. He could afford it if he lost, but he wanted vengeance, another score to mark up against his old enemy and rival, Steve Cotton.

"A fix!" It had an ugly sound. Coupled with the sinister hints of murder, it was worse. But Quenton was positive that only the rumor of a fixed fight could account for the change in the betting odds.

He was frowning darkly when he turned the knob of the door to Steve Cotton's office.

MIDSHIPMAN DAVE HARMON'S manager was ordinarily a dapper, sleek man of medium height whose haberdashery was a model for Broadway. He had a swarthy complexion, and frequent visits to his barber made his olive skin seem almost too well shaven and cared for.

His eyes were dark, always alert, and he had a wide, generous mouth that could break easily into a smile.

But when Quenton entered Cotton's office that day the manager was not smiling. He had the look of a man harassed; his dark eyes were haunted; there were shadows under them. It was the first time Nick Quenton had ever seen him appear at all ruffled.

There were four men in the office

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when Quenton entered. One of them, a big man in a turtle-neck sweater, held a soiled towel in his hand and was bent over Cotton's littered desk. The others might have been newspaper men or simply hangers-on of Broadway's sporting element.

At sight of Quenton, Cotton jerked about and waved aside the others in the room. He motioned the man with the towel away, saying:

"Excuse me, gentlemen! Ten minutes. Talk t' you then. Right now I want to see Mr. Quenton."

One of the men, who looked like a reporter, repeated the name, his eyes lighting quickly with sudden interest. Then he shuffled out. As the door closed on him and the others, Quenton heard: "Who—"

"Yeah, from the Aygee's office. I wonder . . ."

Cotton had hold of Quenton's hand. The manager's eyes were searching his face. Beside Quenton's big shoulders and hard-limbed build, Cotton looked small. He was saying:

"Sit down, sit down . . . those guys can wait!" He made busy-nervous motions as if to clear off his untidy desk top. There was undue vehemence, too, in the way he tipped a chair to spill two dog-eared telephone directories and a set of hard rubber mouth cleats to the floor.

Quenton remained standing. Cotton lit a cigarette, ceased fussing, whirled suddenly.

"I'm no dope, Nick! Let's have it! What's the bad word?"

"The word," Quenton countered, "good or bad, is what I want you to tell me. Have you seen the latest odds against your boy?"

Cotton's face changed. He turned away, stood a moment staring out the window.

"I guess I don't need to see 'em, Nick," he said. "I can do sums. I can guess now what's brought you here. Is the A. G.'s office on my tail, too?"

Quenton explained quietly: "I'm not here officially, Steve. So far as I know, my office has no interest in you or in the fight tonight. Those things are left up to me. This is purely personal. I'd like you to talk—that is, if you feel like talking."

Cotton faced him. Dull-voiced he asked: "What do you want to hear me say?"

Quenton hesitated, then returned quietly: "Suppose we put it this way, Steve. Suppose I came here to tell you that I'm still betting on the Midshipman tonight, that I'm not hedging or covering my bets. That I don't believe in the rumors I've heard—not yet. What would you say?"

The fight manager stopped the cigarette halfway to his lips, met his visitor's cool eyes squarely.

"If it's that way, Nick," he answered at last, "I'd tell you to keep on bettin'. Is that enough?"

"Enough for me. What else?"

"You mean—last night?"

"I've just been trying to put two and two together. It doesn't add up to four. Not this time."

"What've you heard?"

Quenton motioned to the newspaper he still held. "Nothing. But I can read." He waited.

Cotton turned away from him again, looked out through the window. Over his shoulder, in a tight voice, came:

"You got pals on New York Homicide, haven't you?"

Quenton answered: "O'Malley's a pal of mine. But he's also a cop. Don't forget: a square one. Anyhow, I haven't seen him. I told you the truth, Steve. I'm one of those guys that only

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knows what he reads in the papers. What next?"

Cotton caught his breath, whirled. "Why don't your pal O'Malley or some of the others come and put the bracelets on me?"

"Maybe they're not sure they could convict you. Would they be right—or wrong?"

Cotton stared at him. There was something almost like hunger in his dark eyes. Suddenly he looked down at his right hand, at the big seal ring set with an over-conspicuous diamond chip which he wore there. Head jerking up, he muttered: "Do you think I killed her, Nick?"

"No. If it'd been a man killed, I'd say there was a good chance of it. But what's your ring got to do with it, Steve?"

Cotton made a strangled sound in his throat. His face was no longer a dark mask. He swore.

"Oh . . . damn it, man—I hit her with it! Smacked her down! I—I—hell, I might've done the kill, Nick. I was mad enough. But I didn't. So help me, I didn't kill her!"

"Somebody did."

QUENTON let his right leg swing over the desk edge. He flipped flame from a desk briquet to the end of a cigarette; then, narrowing his eyes through the clouds of smoke, he murmured:

"Feel like tellin' me about it? I might possibly be able to help."

Under his breath, the fight manager swore again. It was a deep sound, Harsh. He hesitated. For a long time these two men had known one another. At last Cotton said:

"If anyone can help you can. But you're with the Attorney General's office. Your job is—well, it's to ferret out dirt in a thing like this. In this particular case it'd be to pin something on me, maybe. I know the way the Big Stem is thinkin' right now. But I don't think anyone can help me, Nick. I—I've been framed."

"It's a pretty funny frame when they're willing to do murder to make it stick," Quenton observed quietly.

Cotton stared hard at him. "Then you know it? You've guessed what it is?"

Quenton shook his head. "Only a hazy idea as yet. But I didn't get my present job because I am dumb. And I can still read the odds when they're posted. There's some mighty good reason why the wise money on Broadway is shifting. Doesn't Ozzie Osterman own Tar-Baby?"

"On the sheets of the Boxing Commission, yes. I don't have to tell *you*, though, do I, that Tar-Baby's real owner is Jake Baruch?"

Quenton's eyes half closed and he was nodding quietly. "I know Jake Baruch. And I know his chief gun, Tony Hudson. Where does that crowd fit into the picture?"

"I wish I knew!" Cotton glowered at the desk top. He lit a new cigarette from the stub of his old one, whirled suddenly to say in a fierce, hot voice: "All right, Nick, as I said—if you can't help me, I guess nobody can. Though I'd never have gone to you. On the cards, it's laid out that you should be after me instead."

Quenton's slate-gray eyes were cool. He took the cigarette from his mouth and said: "Get this, Steve. If you're guilty of murder, that's up to New York Homicide. If you're guilty of what the wise money on the street seems to think you're guilty of—planning to fix this fight tonight—that's my job. And if you're guilty of

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neither," he finished, "I happen to be your friend. I like clean sports and it's my job to see that they are clean—in this state, anyhow." He broke off suddenly and demanded: "Where does the Midshipman fit into the picture?"

Cotton returned with a curious note in his voice: "Do you figure he does?"

"It's likely. But—"

The jar of the telephone bell cut in abruptly to break Quenton's words. With a muttered ejaculation, Cotton whirled to the instrument. He picked it up, clapped it against his ear, rasped: "Hello?"

Quenton watched him. Cotton stood listening for perhaps fifteen seconds. Then his face began working. The black eyes narrowed, slitted; he seemed in the grip of an inward fury.

"Is that all?" his hoarse voice came, at last. And, after a brief interval: "You know what you can do with that offer—whoever you are?" he barked. A space of silence followed and then in a dead, flat voice he rasped: "Go ahead! The name's still Steve Cotton. And it's 'Mister' to heels like you!" He stopped talking, eyes wild, and suddenly Quenton heard him query:

"What if he is?" in a startled voice.

Quenton stiffened in his place. Cotton looked across at him, moistened his lips, and then wordlessly held the receiver out toward him. Quenton accepted it, spoke quietly into the transmitter: "Yes?"

"So you're Quenton, eh?"

Quenton bit out: "It's your nickel. What next?"

A harsh laugh came. "We just told your boy friend. Now we're tellin' you. We know you're there, who you are. The advice works for more than one party: Get back to Albany—there ain't so much hot lead in the air up there!"

Abruptly the connection was dead. Quenton pronged the instrument back to its cradle, turned to meet his companion's flushed face. His eyes were cool. He said quietly:

"I can't say that was any great surprise. Know who it was?"

"I don't know *who* it was," Cotton replied, wiping at his mouth with a clean handkerchief; "but I can guess that he was tellin' you to lay off this case. And I know what he told me. He was just passin' the word, he said. It's the third time I've had that same voice on that wire today. I guess they knew you came here and wanted to make sure I wouldn't forget." Cotton shook his head. "You better get out of this, Nick. It's not your party."

Instead of commenting on that, Quenton asked:

"What was the message to you? This and the others?"

Cotton shrank into his chair "Somebody—somebody says he's got eye-witness evidence that I killed Dolly last night."

Quenton looked at him calmly. "Can he back that?"

COTTON returned surprisingly: "I wouldn't be surprised if he could—with the picture framed the way it is now. It's a threat to come out with the evidence. Unless . . ."

"Unless what?" Quenton put in when Cotton hesitated. Then, as the fight manager did not immediately answer, he pursued: "Unless you manage to throw tonight's fight? Is that the way it stacks up?"

"You've called it." Cotton waved his hands. "And the hell of it is I can throw it if I want to! In the Midshipman's corner—why he won't even listen to the bell unless I okay that it's rung. He fights like I tell him, like I taught him to fight; and he won't fight

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any other way. Why should he? It's carried him up—*my way*—from a stumble-bum to the championship. They all know it. They know I can tell the kid to go in there and slug. And that's bad for him. If he tried to out-slug Tar-Baby — well, he'd be passin' over the crown."

There was silence for a moment. Then, through smoke, Quenton said:

"So that's it actually, eh? They're blackmailing you into throwing the fight tonight. Know that voice on the phone?"

Cotton made a helpless gesture. "It isn't Osterman. But we all know who wants the Midshipman to lose, don't we?"

"Besides a lot of bettors who've rushed to place money at the new odds," Quenton said, "I suppose you mean Jake Baruch?"

"Of course. Oh, I *know* the set-up, all right, but who's going to prove it? That voice on the phone just now, it sounded like Baruch's lieutenant to me. Tony Hudson."

Quenton squashed out his cigarette. He murmured:

"Dolly Lafitte was shot with her own gun, so I read."

Cotton looked down at the ring on his hand again, muttered wearily: "Yeah, she had a gun. But I didn't know anything about it. Except, maybe, that she was scared stiff whenever she touched it. A .22, it was."

Quenton seemed to be digesting that bit of information. "And there was no gun found afterward? Hmmmph!"

"I don't know anything about it," Cotton repeated.

"You were at her flat sometime during the evening; known to be there, as a matter of fact, shortly before the kill. You quarreled. Why?"

Cotton hesitated. "I might as well tell you, Nick. Dolly, the last month or so, has been going big for Dave Harmon."

"For the Midshipman?"

"Yeah."

Quenton hesitated, frowned. "What with the quarrel, probably overheard, and all the rest, any court would be likely to believe you killed her for that."

"Sure. Only I didn't. And I don't smack a dame—and a Broadway dame at that—because she suddenly develops a yen for somebody else. I been too long on this street to let that get me." Cotton's dark eyes glowed. He added, in a changed voice: "But I did smack her, Nick; I did smack her. Smacked her down. It was last night, too. That was the row that can undoubtedly be testified to by half a dozen people."

He broke off. Quenton waited, eyes inscrutable.

"I went there last night because—well, I guessed, mostly, I suppose. I'd ordered Midshipman to keep indoors strictly till the fight. He's been inside ever since we got in for training day before yesterday. Okay. Well, about midnight I thought I'd check. I went to his room. He was out and I found out later he'd been out for over an hour then. I went back to my own room, wondering. And while I was making up my mind the phone rang."

Quenton nodded. His eyes were narrowed again. His dark features were unreadable.

"The call"—and Cotton's voice was weary now—"the call told me where I could find the Midshipman."

"I can imagine where that was," Quenton interposed in a dry voice. "So that's how you happened to go to Dolly Lafitte's last night?"

"Yes." But Cotton was shaking his head. "Oh, the call may've been the

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McCoy all right. But Dave wasn't showin' when I got there. On the other hand, I knew damned well he'd been there. We had it out, Dolly and I. But the hell of it all was this, Nick'"—Cotton broke off and put out both hands in a gesture almost pleading—"when I smacked her down it wasn't for that! Not for playing with Dave! It was for—for something else."

Quenton leaned forward. "'I think I'm getting ahead of you. But go on."

COTTON shook his head, a baffled look in his eyes. "I'd already told her we were through. To pack up her bags and scram out. I wasn't listening to any explanations, either. I meant it. But still . . . that wasn't why I took that poke at her."

Quenton leaned forward. "'I think you mean she—'"

"You've guessed it! Somebody'd gotten to Dolly and promoted her into bracing me to throw tonight's fight! She wanted me in Dave's corner—*to help him lose!*"

Quenton's eyes were glinting. "'I don't get it,' he said finally.

"'Neither did I—maybe. She said her brother was in a jam—a bad jam. I didn't listen. Nick, I may be wrong in lots of ways and I'll never be a model for a Boy Scout statue, but I never shot crooked and I'm not startin' now. And that,' Cotton finished, "is the real reason why Dolly got herself smacked and why there'll be the mark of this ring of mine on her face. I slammed out!"

"And," Quenton observed dryly, "half the population of that neighborhood heard you?"

"'Uh-huh. Lots of people heard me. I don't suppose any of them realize, though, that when they come right down to it they're my best alibi."

Quenton shook his head. "A clever criminal," he said, "would figure just that way. If it *had* been you who killed her, after that quarrel, and you were a wise guy, you'd have done just what you will seem to have done—kept on making noise and then slammed out." He broke off to inquire abruptly: "'No guns?"

Cotton looked surprised. "'From what I've heard the gun that killed her was her own heater, wasn't it?"

"'The papers don't say. And now the idea is they've got the kill fastened on you. If you don't throw the fight—and they know that, in the champ's corner, you're able to do that—they'll come out with this mysterious evidence they have?"

"'That," Cotton agreed, "seems to be the picture."

Quenton grunted. "'Yes. And in a very lovely frame, too . . .'"

Cotton gave a grating laugh. "'So what next?"

Quenton straightened. "'Maybe I've got ideas. It's odd, in the first place, that no gun was found, though the lead in her came from a .22 automatic, and you say she had one." He paused a moment. "Did Dolly have any other playmates? What about this brother you mentioned?"

Cotton made a sound of disgust. "If she had any other playmates, I didn't know about it," he said. "It was only this new yen she'd acquired for the Midshipman. Good night, she could've had the Midshipman from me on a silver platter if she'd left the fight game alone. Dames are cheap, but a good battler comes high. And perfume and resin don't mix."

Into the silence that followed, Quenton queried:

"This brother . . . a real brother?"

"'Yeah. Name of Ronnie. Ronnie hit

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New York about eight months ago, good-lookin' kid — figuring to use Dolly to get a boost up into the stage or the night club racket, some way. But he never really wanted to work. I guess she kept him. He's the kind that wouldn't mind."

Quenton nodded and made for the door. He said:

"Carry on the good fight, Steve. I'm going to be looking around."

Cotton gripped the thick upper arm of the A. G.'s office operative.

"You're a grand guy, Nick," he said. "I don't know what you're lettin' yourself in for, but it's a lot that you believe in me. For the rest—I'll play the game as I've always played it. I'm keeping the Midshipman incommunicado, hoping no word gets to him about what's happened. That'd finish him plenty for tonight, if he finds out before the fight. And even at the best, he's got a whale of a battle on his hands. But I'm giving you my promise—if it's up to me to make him win—he's still the champ tomorrow!"

CHAPTER II

Murder Scene

IT was later than he had realized, Quenton noted, when he took leave of Cotton. His hand moved almost inadvertently to where he wore his shoulder harness before he remembered that he was unarmed. He hailed the first taxicab he saw, gave the address of his hotel downtown.

He had not forgotten that voice on the telephone, nor did he underestimate the men ranged against him. One murder had been committed already. They knew him for an enemy. And the game was big, far too big to let scruples about a second or even a third murder stand in the way of the goal.

The late summer day was very hot. Once in his own suite, Quenton threw off his clothes, laid out clean linen, and stepped into the shower. He emerged from the cold water whistling, throwing on a ragged bathrobe as he walked.

Just inside the door of his own room he brought up with a momentary jerk. The whistling never really ceased as he crossed to his bureau and rummaged needlessly for another batch of linen. His hands reached his shoulder holster, contacted the cool gun butt. Still whistling, he clamped his long fingers about the butt, drew it free, and turned slowly with the weapon half-concealed as a coarse voice rasped:

"That's a lousy tune!"

Quenton made the full turn. The gun was concealed in the folds of the gown he was wearing and his hands appeared to be crossed in front of him to pull the cloth over his nakedness.

Across the room stood a burly man who seemed to be in his middle forties, a man with scant hair plastered to cover the greatest possible area of baldness, a hard jaw and a broken nose that was set between two half-slanting, pale-blue eyes.

Quenton's whistle broke off. He raised his eyebrows, murmured: "If I'd known I was receiving you I should have been prepared—"

The intruder broke in with: "Cut it! Cut it! You're from the Aygee's office, ain't you? Nick Quenton?"

"You must be a detective!" Quenton returned with mock surprise. "Why, only everybody in this hotel knows that secret, and two or three dozen other people in New York. How did you find out?"

"Cut it, cut it!" The voice had a vicious snarl in it now. "I just wanted to make sure about the name . . ."

The heavy .45 automatic in the

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visitor's hand was coming up; there was an ugly look in the pale eyes. Quenton had seen that look before. He knew what it meant. He protested: "If I'm not wrong, you'd better stop and figure what chance a cop-killer has in this town!"

A crooked leer crossed the hood's face. "How is anybody to tell you're a cop, in that Mother Hubbard outfit you're wearin'? Can you take it, Big Boy? Because if y' can't—"

There was no more chance to compromise. The heavy .45 came up, leveled at Quenton's middle. Quenton's .38 beat it to the click by about a tenth of a second. Quenton threw himself sidewise when he fired.

The slug from the .45 sang by his shoulder, thudded into the bureau behind him, chipping part of the mirror where the glass met the frame.

Quenton's gun snapped level for a second shot, but his victim had enough. He was stumbling forward across the faded carpet. The big .45 had dropped to the carpet and the big hood was about to cover it with his limp bulky carcass.

Somewhere in the distance, a whistle shrilled. Coolly Quenton stepped to the telephone. He asked for the house detective, and when he was connected, he rasped out:

"Leahy? Hear those shots?"

"Yes. We all did! Say, what—"

Quenton cut him off abruptly with: "Drag yourself up here as fast as an elevator will take you! Come alone. You can talk to the manager afterward. Fast!"

He hung up, walked across the room and stood over the assassin. The man lay on his face and blood was already oozing from his left side to stain the dark carpet a deeper crimson. The gun was pinned under him. Quenton did not touch it. He was feeling for a pulse, discovering there was none, when the door burst open inward.

He whirled. The door clicked shut. Leahy, tall and gangling, freckle-faced and blue-eyed, stepped in with an oath.

Quenton got up. He snapped: "Take a look at him, Leahy." Then, as the house detective turned the corpse over callously to glimpse the face: "Know him?"

Leahy let the head drop back without emotion, stood up and nodded: "Yeah. Name o' Snyder. Believe it or not, Archibald Snyder. Used to run with Capper's mob. I haven't seen him in years."

Quenton sighed. "Well, it's too bad he can't tell me who sent him; but I can guess," he said. "Do your stuff, Leahy. Your employers will be as willing to keep this business quiet as I am. We know nothing; see? An ex-con broke in on me and tried to hold me up. That's the story."

Leahy went to the telephone, nodding. "I guess that'll suit everybody." He was giving a number when he turned to ask: "Didn't he nick you none?"

"No, but it wasn't his fault." Quenton picked up a cigarette, lit it, and said between puffs: "Get Room Service while you're there. Tell 'em to send up a pint of Bourbon and some fizz water. When they come with it, go to the door and take it yourself."

AT five o'clock he and Leahy were working on the whisky. The body had already been removed. Quenton had almost finished dressing when the desk rang his room and announced Lieutenant O'Malley.

O'Malley came into the room a few minutes later, a short, stocky man in

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dark clothes, wearing a clipped, straight mustache over hard lips. He nodded to Leahy, shook hands with Quenton, said: "You should stay in Albany. Better air. What's the story?"

"Not much. A punk broke in just as I was coming out of the shower. I was too fast for him."

"What'd he want?" O'Malley's blue eyes were piercing.

Quenton grinned. "If you must have the truth, O'Malley, he wanted to know my name!"

The detective's eyebrows arched. He went to the table, poured himself a short drink in a glass which Leahy pushed toward him. He downed the drink, made a wry face, said: "Maybe he just didn't like the name, hunh? Come on, Nick, what's the rest?"

Quenton shook his head. "'S help me, that's all there is." He frowned. "I was in a spot. I had to shoot as best I could—while he was doing the same thing. Otherwise I'd have winged him. But I hadn't the chance. It was him or me and I'm as sorry about it as you are. Maybe more so."

O'Malley's eyes were squinting. He took a deep breath, murmured: "Of course it's just possible that it's some grudge carried over from your duties with the Aygee's office. I said it's just possible — but I don't believe it. I wouldn't be a bit surprised if this had some connection with the Dolly Lafitte murder last night."

Surprisingly, Quenton returned: "Neither would I. But you can't prove it by me." He looked at his watch, strapped it back on his wrist. "Goin' to take in the bout tonight, O'Malley?"

"Yeah. You?"

"I came down for it." Then he asked abruptly: "O'Malley, what about Steve Cotton?"

O'Malley started to speak, then broke off and shrugged. "What about him? He'll keep. He can't get away." He turned suddenly. "What about him, if it's that way? Don't you know that you're not in too nice a spot yourself right now? A kill—even if it's just a punk—still is a kill."

"So what?" Quenton parried, narrow-eyed.

"So I'm a friend of yours," O'Malley returned. "And so there's a lot of dirt being dished about tonight's fight and they all know your name—also your friendship with Cotton. It adds up to the fact that there'll be a lot of questions before this mess is finally settled."

O'Malley waited. Quenton was fixing the links in his cuffs when he came across the room and laid a hand on the New York policeman's shoulder. He dropped his voice.

"Can you fix something for me, O'Malley?"

"I guess. What is it?"

Instead of replying directly, Quenton countered: "Your Homicide men been camping in that Lafitte apartment all day, I suppose?"

"Sure. But we've cased it. There's no more guard there after six o'clock tonight."

"Good!" Quenton laid a hand on the big Homicide man's shoulder. "The favor is this: At about seven or thereabouts tonight I'm going to show up there. Alone. I'd like, if you could, to have a man open the door for me, pass me in. Then leave me. That's all."

O'Malley frowned. "Can do," he returned, "though I still don't get the big idea."

Quenton turned away and tucked in his shirt with a short laugh. "Looking for something," he said. "Something the flatties of this big town

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missed, evidently. I'm counting on you, don't forget!"

CHAPTER III

Fatal Rendezvous

IT was after seven when Quenton arrived at the apartment building in which Dolly Lafitte had been murdered. He found a dark man with suspicious eyes waiting for him in the small lobby. Before he could speak, the waiting man said: "I guess you'll be Quenton, eh?"

Quenton nodded and the dark man turned, opened the outer door, silently led the way up the stairs. Upstairs, they halted before a door which was numbered: Three-Eleven.

The man from O'Malley's office inserted a key in the lock, threw the door wide open. "Lights on the right as y' go in. That all?"

"That's all. Thanks."

The door closed softly and Quenton found himself alone in the apartment where Dolly Lafitte had met her death.

The place did not look disarranged. The living room was small, plainly furnished. Only three or four sentimental novels stood in the narrow bookcase. A desk, evidently chosen from a store catalogue, stood in one corner.

The decorations showed nothing. Three framed photographs hung in the bedroom on the wall. There was no evidence that the place had really been lived in.

The carpet in front of the divan in the living room was slightly askew. It showed traces of dark dampness where bloodstains must have been.

Quenton pushed his way into the tiny bedroom. He found a deep bed there, a dresser, a dressing table with a small chair to match, another chair near the window. Quenton mused, that, the murdered girl's background was completely conventional and that nothing in the place gave any stamp of personality.

He stood in the center of the living room. Eyes half-closed, he tried to reconstruct the scene. Shaking his head, then he riffled through the drawers of the bookcase.

A .22 caliber gun, he reflected, was a strange weapon for any serious gunman to make use of. Deadly at short range, it was still not the gun that a real criminal would use. Not without a definite purpose. Anyway, they had not found the gun. . . .

Quenton brought up in the center of the living room, pushed back his battered hat, a baffled look in his eyes. He glanced at his watch. The preliminaries were beginning at the Garden right now. Cotton was waiting in the Midshipman's dressing room — tense, expecting the hand of the Law. . . .

Quenton cursed softly. This wasn't the kind of a job Steve Cotton would do. In anger, yes. A quick kill in passion and he'd be ready to face the consequences. But not this subtle brand of murder. It didn't fit the man!

He moved into the bedroom once more. There, peering into a clothes closet which still retained the faint odor of *chypre*, he suddenly froze. A sound had come from behind him.

He stepped free, hand darting inside his coat and closing on the .38 there. He waited, holding his breath.

Someone had entered the small foyer. Quenton stood very still, intent, waiting. He heard the movement of a body.

He retreated silently, slipped into the clothes closet and pulled the door almost closed behind him.

There followed an interval of per-

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haps thirty seconds. The stealthy feet advanced, sliding carefully over the carpet of the living room. The door to the outer hall had clicked shut.

From the angle in which he stood, crouched in the clothes closet, Quenton was able to survey most of the living room. The intruder came into his range of vision almost at once.

He was a tall, thin youth with sunken cheeks and high cheekbones below brown hair which was plastered flat against the sides of his head. The lad wore a soft fedora hat pulled low over his eyes; his eyes, darting shiftily about, were a pale blue and nervous.

With a look behind him at the closed hall door, the youth moved swiftly to the bedroom, shoving a key into the side pocket of his coat. Once inside, he halted abruptly. Quenton could hear his panting; it was quick and nervous and at intervals the breath hissed sharply between his teeth.

After an interval, the youth apparently made up his mind.

Quenton watched him throw back the covers of the bed, toss the sheets to one side with a muttered exclamation of impatience. There were two mattresses on the bed; the lower one a box mattress. He hurled the top one back. The bed now lay in disarray.

QUENTON could see his man reach into the hollowness of the box mattress, where a slit had been made, grope there. The echo of a grunt came, the sound of something ripping away. Then the youth who had broken into the flat was straightening up with an ejaculation of satisfaction.

Quenton, from his vantage, could see why. The intruder was holding a small, pearl-handled automatic pistol—a .22! It had been concealed in the box spring of the murdered girl's bed.

The youth stuffed the weapon into his pocket, glanced around him hastily, his tongue running over his thin lips. As he turned to reach for the door, Quenton got a clear look at his face. There was no longer any doubt as to his identity. The key had given him a hint in the first place; now he was certain. This was Ronald — Ronnie Lafitte, Dolly's brother.

Lafitte had almost reached the bedroom door when Quenton stepped out to confront him. The youth recoiled.

He made a sudden, convulsive dive for the gun he had placed in his pocket. But Quenton's .38 had slipped into view almost carelessly, was nudging him. Quenton drawled: "That wouldn't get you anywhere. Turn around and put your hands up!"

Gasping, the youth obeyed the hard voice. Quenton stepped behind him, slipped the small automatic from his side pocket, dropped the weapon carefully in a handkerchief. He stowed the package away, said to his prisoner:

"That'll be enough. You can put your hands down now."

Fiercely, wildly, the youth turned to face him. Quenton got a more careful look at him, nodded.

"Yes. . .You're her brother."

"What's it to you?" Lafitte's lips were writhing. A savage, desperate look glowed in his eyes.

Quenton shook his head. "Why'd you kill her? Wasn't she anteing up any more dough to cover those floating crap games?"

A snarl was his answer. "Who are you, anyhow?"

Quenton smiled bitterly. "Who I am shouldn't matter to you now. Why did you kill your sister?"

A wild flame came leaping into the younger man's eyes. "I didn't! Didn't kill her! I didn't!"

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Quenton's right eyebrow drew down. He touched the bulge the .22 made in his pocket.

"Of course not," he murmured sarcastically. "You're just the guy who knew where the gun was when the police didn't and you came back for it as a souvenir."

"I knew where the gun was because I put it there!" the boy cried. "And it is the gun she was killed with. Only the guy who pulled the trigger wore gloves. But I—aw, I'll never be able to get anyone to believe me. . . ."

Quenton drew out the automatic again, examined it carefully. When he touched the button and ejected the clip, he saw two shots had been fired from it. He returned the gun to his pocket and looked up at Ronnie once more.

"I was waiting here, just hoping someone might come in to recover this gun. Seemed strange, the caliber and all that. She was killed with .22 bullets. Sure you didn't kill her?"

"You'll never believe me and neither will the cops," Lafitte moaned. "But I didn't!"

Quenton spoke carefully. "Don't get the wrong idea. But if you're telling me the truth, you must know who did kill her. You were here."

The boy's eyes gleamed. "Suppose I do know? What's it to you?"

"Quite a bit," Quenton replied patiently. "And even more to you. Right now you're in a perfect spot for a murder rap. Personally, I don't give a lick about you—I'm in this on another angle—but if you're not guilty, it might help if you would spill out the dope."

For a moment there was silence. Lafitte gulped twice. He had a weak, rather handsome face. His clothes screamed Broadway. His mouth was loose, almost feminine. He pounded a clenched fist into the palm of his other hand, exclaimed:

"I've been—framed!"

Quenton smiled. "Try something new. Every killer says that at the showdown."

THE youth suddenly threw out his hands. "That gun you took away from me—I gave it to her. She was always scared to death of it. So I had to load it for her—the last time. That's how the coppers'll find my prints all over it."

Quenton waited in silence.

The boy went on hastily: "Like I say, I loaded the gun for her. And afterwards she was killed with it. She was afraid last night. And that's all I'm going to tell you."

He looked away from the big man's searching gaze. Quenton told him quietly: "I'm inclined to believe you so far—but it's not enough. For instance, you were here last night and you came back just now to recover that gun. Therefore you've only told me half the story. She was killed with this automatic after you'd filled it for her. If you didn't kill her—on the orders of the crowd you're running with—then you know who did and you've been wise enough to come back here and try to recover the weapon with your fingerprints on it." Quenton paused. "We've got that far. Now what's the rest of it?"

For a moment Lafitte looked away. He cast a quick, shuddering look over his shoulder at the door. "Who are you, anyway, mister?"

"Does it matter? I've got the law behind me. And it ought to be enough for you to know you're in a spot. Start talking!"

Young Lafitte licked his lips, shook his head. "You probably won't believe

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me and I'm wastin' time tryin' to tell you. But here's the set-up:

"Dolly—my sister—she was two-timin'."

Quenton's eyes narrowed. "With anyone beside Midshipman Dave Harmon and Steve Cotton?"

The youth looked startled. "You know a lot, don't you?"

"I get around. What's the rest?"

"You know Tony Hudson?"

Quenton's gray eyes became unreadable. He said: "I know Tony Hudson. What about it?"

The boy shrugged, spread his hands. "I'm in over my head with Hudson's boss, Baruch. That's most of it. Owe him my shirt and—and he's got something on me, besides."

Quenton prompted: "I can believe that. But he hasn't got murder—yet."

The words acted as a goad. "That's it!" Ronnie exclaimed. "I was supposed to come here and act as a go-between. They offered Dolly big dough and some—some other considerations. I was—I was—"

"The spot they had you in was one of the 'considerations,'" Quenton broke in, dry-voiced. "I got it. What next?"

There was a long interval of silence.

"She was supposed to work on Cotton to make him throw the Midshipman's fight tonight. Well, maybe she did try to work on him for my sake, at that. Maybe she did promote him in the hopes he'd throw the fight. Everybody knows he can throw it from the Midshipman's corner if he wants to. Anyway, I put it to her. She told me no dice. But maybe..." Lafitte looked around the room helplessly. "Maybe she did try."

He stopped. Quenton shook his head. "You mean she tried to have Cotton throw the fight for your sake—and because she was tied up with this crowd anyway—and that Cotton may have turned on her and killed her?" His voice was a rasp.

Lafitte gave a strangled sound in his throat. He put up his hands as though he would ward off something.

"*I* didn't kill her!" he insisted in a broken voice. "I came here to get that gun—my own reasons. To get it out of here. Then I—I'll get the devils who did it! I'll—"

Quenton said: "I think I believe you. All I want now is who did the kill? You saw it. Who—!"

The youth shook his head stubbornly. He fumbled for a cigarette, lit the tube, spoke:

"They had me—like you guessed. I went to Dolly and told her she had to make Cotton throw the fight. Either Cotton or Harmon; she had 'em both where she wanted 'em and I didn't care. She turned me down. So they sent me up here again last night. Alone. I tried to talk to her some more. She said she was scared—scared for me and scared for herself. I guess she'd suddenly seen how big the picture was. So she asked me to take a look at her gun. She was panicky of it but she was terrified enough last night to want to have it around. So I snapped a cartridge into the chamber so it was ready to fire."

SILENCE again. Quenton's eyes were narrowing this time as Lafitte stole another nervous look over his shoulder. But, "What happened then?" he asked, with the curious feeling that he already knew.

"They—they come in."

The words fell flat. Quenton's eyes narrowed. He could guess at a lot but he only said in a quiet voice: "Just walked in?"

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"No. They rang the apartment bell. She went and answered it. She was afraid not to! She told me to duck. I did." Lafitte pointed to the next room, to the door of the closet which had sheltered Quenton. "I went inside there," he explained.

He was finding it hard to talk. Quenton's voice was more gentle when he prompted:

"I'm beginning to get it. What then?"

"They saw the gun right away—in her hand. She didn't have a chance. She even put up a fight when they took it away from her." Lafitte shivered. "I could understand. But I didn't think they'd go through with it." He broke off, shivering, took a grip on himself and went on: "She was one of them dames, you know, who hated the very sight of a rod. . . . Then I could hear 'em talkin'. I heard a laugh and words, 'If that's all she's got to offer, we'll have to take the other way out. It works out the same in the end. Give it to her—and let Cotton think up the answers!' That's what I heard."

The boy was nearly sobbing now.

Quenton said: "That sounds straight. But who were the men who came in?"

Lafitte's head raised and his eyes flashed with a light that had not been in them before. Through his teeth, the murdered girl's brother choked:

"You'll have to find that out for yourself! I was yella last night. And I had no gun. And I'm still yella now. But I'm not going to be yella when I meet up with those dirty women killers the next time!"

Quenton stared at him. In a quiet voice, he said: "Assuming I believe everything you've told me, you still know who killed your sister. And if you won't tell me, I'll have to take you in. Ever hear of Lieutenant O'Malley, of Homicide?"

"So?" The hot eyes were still defiant.

Quenton sighed. "I guess we'll have to go down and see him."

"You mean you're—takin' me in—for—"

Quenton nodded gravely. "I'm taking you in. I don't think you committed the murder. But your prints are all over the gun. If you don't talk to me, you'll have to talk to O'Malley."

Quenton pulled up suddenly, frowning. "Why did you happen to leave that gun in the bed spring?"

"They left it on the floor. The guy who did the kill wore gloves. So only my prints were on the rod—mine and hers. When I heard the commotion—the police whistles and all—I had to get out—without the gun. If they caught me with it, there would be no chance at all."

Quenton nodded with brooding eyes. "And the gang sent you back for it today. Told you you were on the spot and that you'd better recover the gun. Right?"

Sullenly Lafitte nodded. "Yes."

Quenton sighed. "Well, we'll see what O'Malley thinks." He looked at his wrist watch. "I've still got to make the fight at the Garden, so—"

He stopped abruptly. A scraping sound had come to his ears. Lafitte's face drained white as he stared wide-eyed at the door leading to the outer hall. He opened his mouth to cry out but Quenton's palm clapped across his lips. Quenton's voice rasped into his ear:

"Steady! Don't let 'em know I'm here!"

He shoved Lafitte a little so he was just inside the living room. Quenton dropped back out of sight behind the

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V made by the half-closed bedroom door.

He heard the hall door swing open, close again. Then Tony Hudson and Ben Tully, Hudson's "torpedo," had come into the apartment. He could hear Hudson's low, contemptuous laugh.

"All right, kid, you take your orders nice. Hand over the rod!"

Lafitte's voice came in stammering reply: "I—I haven't got it. It's—it's gone—"

Hudson's hard-heeled tread sounded across the room and then his cold voice rasped: "What do you mean you haven't got it? Want to take the hot squat? If you don't dig up that gun, the John Laws'll find it. You know what that means, don't you?"

Quenton heard Lafitte's voice, fearful and quavering and yet with a new quality in it.

"I know what you're doin', Hudson! You and the whole lot behind you. You're framin' me for my sister's murder. You—"

TULLY'S cold laugh cut in as Hudson took a step across the room. Quenton could hear Hudson's palm smash across the youth's mouth.

Hudson was dapper, neatly and fastidiously attired in a style that was Broadway's own, a tall, slim and elegant hood who affected silk shirts of various hues and the newest Broadway patternings in cravats and waistcoats.

Tully was laughing, a hard chuckle. "So he's talkin' about a frame now, is he?" He moved closer to say: "Don't be a sap, kid! This is a frame, you're right. But your picture ain't in it. *Not yet!*"

"What does that mean?"

Hudson cut in: "We're talking too much. Ben means just this, kid: Somebody's got to take a homicide rap. And *it's* going to be Steve Cotton."

"But suppose Steve Cotton takes your orders?" Lafitte queried. "Suppose he does throw the fight tonight? Who takes this rap then?"

Hudson hesitated, perceptibly. "The boss hates Cotton's guts," he said. "It's not our business what he does afterwards. See? Right now, we're making sure you behave. That's why we got to have that gun. It'll make you line up. You're safe playin' with us—but we ain't sure of you." He continued in a harder voice: "So in case you get religion, maybe, Lafitte, and you don't want to see Cotton going to the hot squat instead of us—well, if Cotton don't go—*you do!* Get it?" He emphasized his remarks with a slight pause.

"So that's the picture. You hid the rod. You were supposed to get it. Let's stop talking, grab the gat and get to hell out of here!"

Quenton was at the crack in the door. When Hudson rapped out his last command, he was unfolding a large square of white handkerchief. The gun would be dropped into it, retaining the fingerprints of the last person to handle it. Ballistic experts would have no difficulty in proving that the fatal slugs had come from the weapon.

Quenton watched the youth back toward the door. He stepped quietly into the living room. Tully saw him first. Hudson whirled with an oath at Tully's startled cry. Quenton rasped: "He hasn't got the gun, Hudson. Try again!"

Tully's twisted mouth was sputtering: "Quenton! The Aygee's office dick from Albany!"

Hudson was snarling. "So he *did* cut himself in!"

His hand darted in a movement for

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a shoulder holster, even as Tully cried almost frantically: "He heard it! He's—"

Tully's gun was in his side pocket. It caught as he tried to jerk it free. Hudson swept his body sidewise and his hand flashed under his coat lapel. Lafitte gave a choked cry and flung himself back against the wall.

Tully's first shot went wild, dug into the door frame behind Quenton. Quenton's .38, appearing as if by magic, was speaking with precision. Hudson's big .45 exploded twice. Its bellow was earsplitting in that confined space. Quenton could feel the lead pluck at his sleeve. He could hear the vicious, thuds it gave as it ricocheted past him and slammed into furniture.

Tully swerved, placed himself sideways again as he pressed trigger, just as Quenton's lead caught him at the base of the throat. Tully went down, dead. . . .

Hudson was on one knee, bringing up his gun again. Quenton's beat his shot by a fraction of a second, slammed him back against the divan. Hudson dropped there in an inert heap. His eyes were staring with a fixed, wild hatred. Suddenly his eyes widened, beyond Quenton; he cried out.

Quenton turned, still wary of the old trick. He heard a crash as the bedroom window fell, caught a glimpse of young Ronald Lafitte scrambling for the fire escape steps.

He shook his head, turned to hear Hudson saying: "If you're wise, Quenton, you'll finish now. The next time —you won't have a chance!"

Quenton shook his head. He kicked the useless guns into the bedroom, locked the door, slipped the key into his pocket. He looked at his watch. A grim smile twisted his lips as he glanced from the dead man to the wounded.

"I've missed the preliminaries at the Garden," he complained. "Hard luck! But I'll catch some of the main bout. In the meantime, take care of Tully. Or explain him away. Personally, I don't give a damn which it is."

He went out. Near the steps leading to the street, two or three people stopped to look at him strangely. A policeman was headed in his direction. Quenton hailed a cruising taxicab and gave the address. The cab shot across town toward the Garden.

CHAPTER IV

Boomerang Frame

QUENTON arrived at his reserved seat at the ringside as the bell summoned the fighters for the fourteenth round. In his taxi, coming across town, the radio had been blaring at him the progress of the battle. So he knew, even before he reached the arena, that if the champion failed to win by a knockout—which was generally conceded to be impossible—he would lose the fight by a decision.

Midshipman Dave Harmon, out of thirteen rounds, had earned three—and those by the narrowest of margins.

The tenth round had been the worst. Harmon had almost taken the count in that round. The bell had saved him—the bell and the minute of rest between rounds, when his handlers had worked miracles over him.

Quenton managed to find his seat almost unnoticed. The ringside was crowded. Celebrities were attending this battle en masse.

Just in front of him, he saw Steve Cotton. Cotton was crouched below his fighter's corner, white-faced, strained, with a haunted, desperate look in his eyes.

Quenton slipped from his seat,

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moved to Cotton's side and asked quickly: "What's the trouble? Have they got to him with the story that you killed the Lafitte?"

Cotton turned haggard, fear-ridden eyes to him. "Somehow—they must've got word to him about the tenth round. Don't ask me how. Take a glom at Tar-Baby. He probably blabbed it to him when they were in a clinch."

"But what could they tell him?" Quenton demanded.

Cotton shook his head. "They could tell him I'm on the spot for Dolly's kill, couldn't they? He had a big yen for the gal, in his way, I guess. If he believes 'em—he's known all day there was something wrong—"

He did not finish. The battle in the center of the ring had taken on suddenly a more furious aspect. The Tar-Baby was a squat, hairy individual with long, spidery arms and beetling forehead; he had two cauliflower ears and a nose which in some past combat, had been permanently flattened to his face.

The Midshipman had always appealed to the fight fans as a clean-looking, clean-cut young fighter. He was tall and superbly proportioned; his hair was a bright yellow and even now it shone against the smooth tan of his body. But now his face was covered with blood and blood smeared the muscles of his back and shoulders.

In a cracked, broken voice Cotton was saying: "They must've got word to him, see? Told him I'm on the spot for her kill." He suddenly gave a harsh laugh that was more like a croak. "And why not? Why did we take so much pains to keep the news from him all day? That didn't bother those guys. Givin' the word to him this way—when there's no chance to argue about it—was the best way for them, after all. He just ain't listenin' to what I tell him any more. He's deaf—deaf to the man who made him!"

Quenton was watching the champion. The Midshipman was obviously fighting a losing fight. Cotton had told him to cover up in this round, to box and keep away from the flailing arms of the challenger. Quenton knew that, at this stage, Cotton was holding his man back for a final, do-or-die finish in the last round. But not yet. . . .

Cotton had warned Harmon to avoid infighting and clinches. But the Midshipman was battling in directly the opposite style. As though to satisfy some deep hunger and fury inside him, he was closing with his antagonist, meeting him in toe-to-toe slugging. He could not win from Tar-Baby Munn that way.

As the bell sounded for the end of the round, Cotton said wearily: "He knows he's licked. He won't listen now. He doesn't give a damn. . . ."

Quenton's fingers dug hard into the manager's arm. "Here's your last chance!" he snapped. "He knows who I am. Tell him I'm out here—that I've discovered the killer. That after the fight—"

The warning horn came. The handlers dropped back under the ring. Quenton glanced over his shoulder and saw that he was being watched curiously from the rear. Ozzie Osterman, Tar-Baby's nominal owner, and Jake Baruch, were eying him, bent forward in their seats, exchanging short, crisp sentences out of the sides of their mouths.

"You mean it?" Cotton's voice came in a hopeful croak.

"Tell him!" Quenton snapped.

Cotton waited for no more. There was barely time. He scrambled up, clung to the post in the corner, leaned forward just in time to throw a hoarse whisper into the champion's ear. Then

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the gong was clanging for the beginning of the last round.

Even the customers in the highest galleries could see the change in the way the Midshipman came out. For the first time in many rounds, he actually bounded from his stool.

The Tar-Baby saw him coming, leered. They touched gloves perfunctorily, closed. There came the furious pound of blows, hard infighting. Then the battlers broke apart. Cotton's voice made itself heard above the din of the roaring stadium.

"Dave! Remember! It was his gang that turned the heat on her! The Tar-Baby's gang!"

The fight fans were witnessing a miracle. The Tar-Baby had come in with a confident smile on his battered features. The touching of gloves at the opening of that last round had been the merest formality. Then they were at it.

The challenger had come in for the kill. He believing he faced a disheartened, weary antagonist, more than half beaten already and only waiting for the finishing touches. Up to this round, that had been almost so.

But the Midshipman was no longer even making a pretense of boxing. He was a raging fury. . . .

THE fans in the galleries stood on their seats and roared. The stadium rocked with cries, yells, wild shouting. In the press row, scribes sat amazed, fingers scarcely bothering with the littered sheets in front of them; radio men got tangled up in their staccato flow of rapid description. Whistles, yells, screams, combined to drown out the sound of the savage avalanche of blows beating down there under the glaring lights of the ring.

Harmon slipped to one knee, fell. As the Tar-Baby made a wild rush for him, he was on his feet again. Tar-Baby's mouth smashed against the champion's rising glove as they met again.

The Tar-Baby rocked; his head rolled. His eyes were looking upward. Harmon stepped back. His bloody lips were working, roaring words, sounds, strangled and disjointed epithets.

The Tar-Baby was facing a raging whirlwind. The man he thought beaten had changed, suddenly, to a ruthless killer.

Almost every spectator in the stadium was on his feet as the Tar-Baby sagged the first time. They saw him stiffen almost instantly, come boring in with a bellow and a wild, uncomprehending look on his savage face.

The Midshipman's left glove was waiting to slap him off balance in his charge. The Midshipman, at the same moment, sidestepped neatly. He lashed out with the left again and then unleashed a right which traveled less than eight inches before it exploded on the Tar-Baby's chin.

A glazed look filled Tar-Baby's eyes. For a moment he hung there ridiculously, his arms flailing. Then, as the Midshipman stepped back, the challenger slumped forward. His knees struck the canvas first and then the whole hairy body followed the lower limbs to be measured there.

Harmon was being waved back. The thunderous yelling in the big auditorium was ear-splitting, deafening. The Midshipman backed into a neutral corner and watched with hot eyes.

The Tar-Baby's right knee came up, jerked once, then straightened. His shoulders twitched. When the bell sounded eleven seconds later, he was still plastered on the canvas.

The spectators went wild. They had

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witnessed a finish most of them had dreamed about but few had ever seen. Cotton was crying hoarsely into Quenton's ear: "For cat's sake, what does it mean?"

Quenton returned calmly: "I haven't got all the answers yet. I'm sticking along with you."

Through a stadium still rocking with hysterical cheering the little band made its way. Police officers moved in smoothly to surround the champion and lead the way back to the dressing rooms. Men reached out from aisle seats to try to grip the arm or the taped hand of the man who had staged a glorious comeback in the last minutes of a losing battle.

When the dressing room door closed Harmon stripped at once and stretched out on the table. Then Cotton whirled on Quenton.

"The one thing I've had on my side ever since Dave found out the news is that you are on my side. He knew that you were out to get the guys. Now, for gosh sake, spill it!"

Quenton nodded, said: "You weren't far wrong, in the first place. At least your guess was close enough to give me my leads. It was Baruch's gang, all right."

"Have you got the goods on 'em? Who did it?"

Quenton shook his head. He grimaced a wry smile. "My chief witness took a powder," he said. "It isn't over yet."

"And that kid brother of hers?"

"He's the chief witness I mentioned," Quenton returned. "Also their ace in the hole."

"But what—"

"Ben Tully could have proved things, but unfortunately I had to kill Tully," Quenton said in a regretful voice.

"Tully? Killed? Did Tully do it?"

"Tully—helped." Quenton shook his head. "Tend to your job, Steve. The final pay off is scheduled for very soon. I hadn't much time, remember. I wanted to get up here with the word. The next act is—quite soon, if I'm not mistaken." He added: "It's got to be! They don't dare leave it this way!"

Cotton gave him another long look, then turned away. Harmon was just stepping out from the showers, bronzed, triumphant. They were toweling him. A little later he broke away from the reporters and handlers, crossed to Quenton and extended a big hand. He said, with a smile: "I don't know all the answers yet, Quenton; but thanks. When you're ready to spill you'll find me listening."

Quenton accepted a big paw, smiled and returned: "Congratulations on a great battle, Harmon. I'll have your answers later."

THE champion seemed satisfied. When he was dressed, his cuts bandaged and after a doctor had looked him over, he turned to his manager and with a look for Quenton said: "All set. What's next?"

Cotton looked at the man from Albany. Quenton said: "We'd better do just as you would do normally. Where would you be going now? Back to the hotel, the *Doremus?*"

"That's right," Cotton agreed. "Dave's got a place there, too, and it's where I'm seein' the news men. We'll hit for there." He looked uncertainly at Quenton, but Quenton made no sign.

One of Harmon's handlers, a bow-legged, entirely bald little man by the name of Gleason, accompanied them. They got into a taxicab on the side street entrance. Outside, as they were

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settling into their seats inside the vehicle, one reporter, holding on to the door, thrust his head inside and said:

"I'll be over at the *Doremus*, all right, Steve. But I'm telling you right now I want more than an after-the-battle, mother's story. That won't go."

The cab door slammed. Cotton sank back. On the way across town little was said. Cotton lit a new cigarette, glancing at Quenton's dark, unreadable features, and then took up the study of his fingernails in a serious way.

Harmon sat back, drawing long breaths, opening and closing his big fists and staring upward at the roof of the cab. He did not look much the worse for wear, surprisingly, in his clothes.

At the hotel, Cotton sprang out and paid the cab fare. Gleason took Quenton's arm and steered him and Harmon through the lobby. Cotton caught up with them at the elevator bank and they were shot up to the tenth floor.

Cotton's apartment was at the end of the corridor. It stood open. Already the air inside was thick with tobacco smoke. Newsmen were lounging about. There were bottles and glasses on an impromptu bar in one corner of the main room. Hotel servants were scurrying in and out through the door cheerfully.

The champion's entrance was greeted by a murmur of gratification. All of those present in his manager's rooms had been at the fight, but this was the first chance any of them had had to greet the champion personally since he had stepped into the ring. He was showered with congratulations.

Cotton, pulling Quenton to one side, said in a nervous voice:

"Well, we're here. What next? When do the cops come for me?"

"They won't be coming for you," Quenton returned. "Not for *you*. But, just the same, I'm expecting you'll have visitors."

He turned. Most of the guests were leaving; they had mostly come only for a word with Harmon. At the door someone was saying: ". . . But the *real* story . . ."

Then Quenton saw the men he expected. Big Jake Baruch stood jammed in the doorway of the suite, a tall, burly man with a low, undershot jaw and icy blue eyes which at the moment looked bloodshot and dangerous. He wore a big fat cigar uptilted in a wide mouth, and his derby was pushed a little back from his receding forehead.

Silence fell as though his appearance had been a signal. Quenton looked up; behind the big-time gambler he made out the figure of a single man, and he gave a start.

It was Hudson. A wide swathe of black silk handkerchief covered the sling in which Hudson's wounded arm rested. His eyes were deadly, bright with some feverish inner fire; but his face was pale and expressionless, like a death mask.

Cotton murmured something under his breath. The room was suddenly very still. In a corner, where Harmon was talking to the last of the reporters, his laugh broke off with a sudden, prescient note in it. Moving his cigar across his mouth, Jake Baruch spoke: "So! It's the payoff—huh, Cotton?"

Steve Cotton moistened his lips. His jaw clamped hard until the ridges at the side of it showed, and he said: "Spill it, Baruch! I'm waitin'!"

The big-time gambler gave a harsh laugh. He gestured over his shoulder, into the hallway. "Passin', I smelled Law outside. We're going to need some of it. Steve, you had your orders and you didn't play. You knew what the

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price was and you reneged. Well, it had to be paid some time, and there's no time like now."

Quenton looked beyond the gambler and saw the tall, burly figure half in shadow against the dimmer light of the corridor outside. O'Malley!

He heard Cotton saying in a tense, dry voice: "You mean you still think you're framin' me for that kill, Jake?"

Baruch shook his head. "It's no frame, Steve. I—"

Quenton stepped forward. As he moved he could see the bulky shadow of O'Malley shift with him. He rapped out: "Maybe you know me, Baruch?"

The gambler eyed him coldly, nodded jerkily. But his eyes became more wary. He said slowly, as though to gain time: "Yeah, I know you. That tough dick from the Aygee's office. So what?"

"So," Quenton responded, "you ought to be wondering what I'm doing here."

THE cigar shifted in Jake Baruch's mouth before he spat out: "Should it make any difference to me? Or Steve?"

Quenton nodded carefully. "A lot," he said, and he flicked a glance at Hudson. "All the difference between a picture and a picture without a frame. The picture is—murder! You thought you'd furnished the frame, but I happened to break it for you. And now you—"

Baruch roared in with: "So you're tryin' your hand at frames now. Is that it?"

Quenton shook his head with deliberation. "I told you the frame is broken." He looked beyond Baruch, beyond Hudson, caught O'Malley's questioning eyes. With false cheerfulness he called: "Hello, O'Malley! You'd better come in."

O'Malley shouldered his way through the doorway and past the others. "I was waitin' downstairs in the lobby, like I told you I'd be. Waited till these birds came in. That's when I saw you guessed right when you said Baruch would be sure to show here, Quenton." He frowned: "But that kid, Nick. He's somewhere around this hotel—the house dick saw him. Did you—"

Quenton said: "No, he had to be here, same as Baruch. It's all right. He's evidence. Don't worry about him. And it was no guess about Baruch, O'Malley. It had to be this way. Thanks for being on hand."

The others in the room looked wonderingly at these two. Even Cotton seemed surprised. Harmon had retired to a corner, where he was standing on the balls of his feet, his eyes darting, the picture of a man awaiting the call to violent action.

O'Malley ignored the others in the room. To the man from Albany he said:

"About the kid, Nick. He's in the room right under this one." And as Baruch and Hudson gave a start he continued: "Shall I bring him in?"

An explosive gasp sounded from somewhere. Hudson dropped back, his good hand fumbling with the black silk scarf holding his smashed arm. Hudson's employer bent forward, heavy jaw outthrust, ruthless, beady eyes glittering. Quenton turned on him.

In a quiet voice he asked: "All right, Baruch? All right with you? I took young Lafitte away from your two hoods this afternoon. Thought I might need him later. Shall we have him tell the story? Or shall I tell it?"

Baruch's heavy jaw clamped harder on his cigar. His eyes were deadly. Hudson moved imperceptibly closer to him, face drawn and tense. Baruch said

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in a low voice: "What would you be tellin', Quenton?"

Quenton countered: "That you got the kid in debt to you, got a strangle-hold over him from some petty crime he'd committed, then sent him to his sister with orders to blackmail her—blackmail for the sake of keeping her brother out of jail—make her use her influence to throw tonight's fight. You're the real owner of Tar-Baby; we all know that. Am I right so far?"

Baruch looked deadly. "We'll pass that right now," he said. "What else do you know?"

"When Dolly couldn't make Steve queer the fight you decided he'd have to be forced. There was too much money involved. After Cotton and Dolly had their quarrel last night you saw the chance you'd waited for. Your hood Tully came into her apartment and killed her with her own gun! Tully—sent by you!"

Baruch sneered. "I suppose you can prove that?"

Quenton nodded. "That's just it. I can. Your careful frame planted a witness right on the scene. Her brother was there, an eyewitness. You sent him back to get his gun today, hoping to tangle him in the thing still further. Only I happened to be there and spoiled it."

O'Malley was waiting. The rest were held tense. Baruch tilted his cigar and said: "It won't wash." He shot a glance toward Hudson. "Won't go, Quenton. I'll have to hear the kid spill that himself. And he'll never live to go to court with it! If he—if that yellow squirt swears to that, we'll—"

He broke off. There was a sudden commotion at the door. A slim figure, coatless and hatless and wild-eyed, burst into the room. He was brandishing a .32 revolver. It was Lafitte. . . .

Cotton cried out something, but no one heard him The boy checked his charge just inside the room. Behind Lafitte Quenton could see the plain-clothesman who had come with O'Malley angling up to take the youth from the rear.

Lafitte screamed: "You yella devil, Baruch! First you make me steer her into playin' crooked with Cotton. Then you plant me to kill her myself—so you could frame Cotton for the job. Then, when I balked, you did it anyhow, with Tully and Hudson. And now you're throwin' it on me again! You're late, Baruch—you and all your pretty frames—too late for anything!"

His gun swung up. O'Malley's lips formed a curse; O'Malley's subordinate made a frantic leap for Lafitte—a leap which Lafitte evaded by a deft sidewise step.

Baruch ripped out a curse and Hudson came in, gun flashing into view from its concealment in the black silk sling. Hudson and Lafitte fired simultaneously. . . .

WITH the echo of Hudson's report, Lafitte gave a strangled, torn cry and toppled backward. Baruch slammed against the wall behind him. His gun roared wildly, ineffectually. Hudson whirled, his fierce, hot eyes searching the room.

He saw Quenton, he saw Cotton and he saw Harmon.

Harmon yelled something and made a dive across the room toward him. But the rush missed. Hudson stepped aside and his gun leveled. O'Malley's revolver swiveled to catch him, but the first shot missed by an inch and Hudson's gun gaped at Quenton's middle.

Hudson was crying: "No matter how this ends, *this'll* square everything!" O'Malley and his man were

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charging as he fired. But there was no need. Quenton's .38 had spoken first. As it blasted out, Hudson's gun spoke, digging lead into the floor. Hudson followed it. He seemed to be trying to pick up the weapon which had been smashed from his grip. He tottered toward it, hunched over ridiculously, to sprawl limply across it.

Through the maddening echoes of gunfire, O'Malley's commanding voice pierced: "Baruch! Drop that rod or take it now!"

Baruch, half sitting up on the floor against the wall, with his recovered weapon in his hand, fell back. The gun clattered noisily. Dead silence fell.

Through the silence came O'Malley's voice, almost breathless, but hard: "And that's that! Baruch, you'll live to fry. Too bad the kid didn't aim better and save the State expense." He looked at Quenton. "But it's a mighty strenuous way to keep champions!" he said bitterly.

Quenton shook his head. "I don't think it's the champions who're important—in the long run. But what they represent is important, and that was worth it. Steve Cotton was willing to risk frying for a murder he didn't commit rather than frame a fight. If y' ask me—that—*that's* mighty important!"

BULLET SANCTUARIES

METALS, especially steel and iron, have been put to many uses by man's ingenuity. Probably the use that one would be most thankful for would be a thickness of steel placed between one's self and an oncoming bullet.

Since the dawn of history, man has sought to protect himself from the onslaughts of the enemy by some form of armor. Before that wandering group of primitive men built the campfire which accidentally melted some iron ore and thus discovered the properties of metal, the armor took the form of the toughest hides of animals which offered good protection due to the fact that the enemy did not have metal weapons to pierce them. When metal weapons were invented, metal armor made its appearance. The Crusaders fashioned suits-of-mail for themselves and for their horses.

Then the automobile and high-power bullets were invented. These modern steeds were covered with bullet-proof steel and bullet-proof glass. One danger was noted. The bullets would not penetrate the steel, but they would ricochet and might kill innocent bystanders. A sheet of aluminum and a layer of insulating material placed on the outward face of the steel permitted the bullet to bury itself without doing much damage.

The modern successor to the armor of the knight takes the form of steel vests. Another type, used by the police of Columbus, Ohio, comprises a steel shield which can be folded up when not needed. This shield is long enough to protect all parts of the body and permits a forward view through a sheet of bullet-proof glass. It also provides means for the protruding of a revolver, or machine gun, so that the offensive may be taken.

—*John Berry.*

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ILLUSTRATED
CRIMES
MURDER
ON THE NAYATT PIKE
ON THE NIGHT OF AUGUST 21, 1915, AN AUTOMOBILE PULLED UP BEFORE A HOSPITAL IN PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND, WITH A MAN CLOSE TO DEATH AND A BADLY WOUNDED WOMAN. BOTH HAD GAPING BULLET WOUNDS IN THEIR BACKS.
Healis
(THE CHAUFFEUR)
THE DRIVER OF THE CAR, GEORGE HEALIS, A COLORED CHAUFFEUR, STAMMERED OUT THE STORY THAT THE VICTIMS, DR. C. FRANKLIN MOHR, HIS EMPLOYER, AND THE LATTER'S BRUNETTE CHARMER, MISS EMILY BURGER, HAD BEEN SHOT OUT ON THE NAYATT ROAD WHEN HE HAD TO STOP BECAUSE OF CARBURETOR TROUBLE.
FOUR SHOTS HAD BLAZED SUDDENLY FROM A CLUMP OF BUSHES AS HE WAS EXAMINING THE ENGINE BY LIGHT OF A FLASH LAMP. HEALIS SWORE HE DID NOT SEE WHO FIRED THE SHOTS.
DR. MOHR WAS BEYOND AID. HE DIED, AND MISS BURGER'S CONDITION WAS SO DESPERATE SHE COULD TELL NOTHING UNTIL DAYS LATER. POLICE WERE STILL QUESTIONING THE CHAUFFEUR THE FOLLOWING MORNING WHEN GEORGE ROOKER, MISS BURGER'S BROTHER-IN-LAW, HANDED THE POLICE A THREATENING LETTER WHICH HAD COME TO MISS BURGER MONTHS BEFORE. IT BORE THE SIGNATURE OF THE MURDERED DOCTOR'S ESTRANGED WIFE.
Dr. Mohr

COMING SOON—

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AS THE AUTHORITIES WERE CONSIDERING THIS, HEALIS CHANGED HIS ACCOUNT OF THE SHOOTING. HE ADMITTED IT HAD RESULTED FROM A PLOT BETWEEN HIM AND TWO OTHER MOHR SERVANTS. HE NAMED Cecil Victor BROWN, EX-STABLEMAN FOR DR. MOHR, AND HARRY SPELLMAN, HIS OWN DULL-WITTED HALF-BROTHER. HEALIS SAID HE HAD BROUGHT THE CAR TO A STOP AT A PRE-ARRANGED SPOT FOR THE HOLD-UP. MURDER HADN'T BEEN PART OF THE BARGAIN.

BROWN AND SPELLMAN WERE ARRESTED. THE FORMER CONFESSED IMPLICATING MRS. MOHR WHO, HE ALLEGED, HAD BEEN SO WROUGHT UP BY JEALOUSY AND HATRED FOR HER HUSBAND THAT SHE HAD HIRED HIM, SPELLMAN AND HEALIS TO KILL DR. MOHR AND HIS PARAMOUR. HE AND SPELLMAN WERE TO GET $2,000 EACH AND HEALIS $1,000. THE HALF-WIT CORROBORATED THE STORY, BUT HEALIS STOUTLY DENIED IT.

THE CONFESSING PAIR RECANTED THE NEXT DAY. NEVERTHELESS, MRS. MOHR WAS ARRESTED BECAUSE OF HER THREAT AGAINST MISS BURGER. SHE DID NOT DENY AUTHORSHIP OF THE NOTE, NOR THAT SHE HAD HIRED THE SERVANTS.

BROWN

SPELLMAN THE HALF-WIT

MRS. MOHR WAS TRIED FOR MURDER ALONG WITH THE SERVANTS. PUBLIC SYMPATHY WAS WITH HER FROM THE START. THE STATE HELD THAT SHE HAD SOUGHT HER HUSBAND'S DEATH FOR REVENGE AND TO OBTAIN HIS ESTATE. HER DEFENSE WAS THAT SHE LOVED DR. MOHR DESPITE ALL AND HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN THE CRIME BY THE ACTUAL SLAYERS WHO HOPED TO LIGHTEN THEIR PUNISHMENT. THE VERDICT WAS ACQUITTAL FOR MRS. MOHR, LIFE IMPRISONMENT FOR BROWN AND SPELLMAN, AND A DEFERRED SENTENCE FOR HEALIS, WHO HAD TURNED STATE'S EVIDENCE.

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TRUE SHORT
DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY

The old woman poked a black-gloved finger into the perambulator, uttered clucking gutturals

The Case of the Extra Bananas

By Dugal O'Liam

GEORGETTE PARRACHON sang softly to herself as she wheeled eighteen-months-old Claude Malmejac, jr., through the Amable - Charnot in the quieter residential section of Marseilles. It was late November. The frost touched sunny Marseilles with a quickening finger. Georgette was nineteen and life was bright and filled with romance. Georgette thought not of the evils of Marseilles—of the sordid waterfront and the notoriously wicked old-town streets, nor of the riffraff of drunken and murderous seamen, outcasts from every port of the seven seas, nor of the skulking robbers and surreptitious kidnapers, nor of the panderers and flesh

Ugly Mobs Formed When Dr. Malmejac's Baby Was Kidnaped—and Préfect Couplet of Marseilles Hunted Like a Madman for Bananas!

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merchants who gave Marseilles its unsavory name. Why should she? She had a good position in a fine family. She loved her infant charge. She was attractive in the vivacious, pert manner of the southern French girls and her life was happy and full.

To her, Marseilles was beautiful in the late autumn, as it was beautiful in the winter and spring and summer. She saw only goodness and beauty about her and so it was that when a feeble, old woman, dressed all in black, approached her, she was courteous and receptive, even though she had never seen the woman before. She was a strange old woman, too, in her long, black coat and black, low-brimmed hat which concealed all but the blue, thin lips and pointed chin of her gray face.

"You are Georgette?" The old woman's voice was low and strangely musical. She gazed into little Claude's perambulator and her eager, black eyes were hidden from Georgette's sight.

"Yes, my name is Georgette."

"And this is the child of Dr. Malmejac?"

"Yes, this is Claude. Isn't he a pretty baby?"

"He is, indeed." The old woman poked in the perambulator with a black-gloved finger, uttering clucking gutturals. "I have brought a message for you from Madame. She asked me to look for you. Dr. Malmejac has been injured in an accident and Madame wishes you to come home at once with the child."

Georgette Parrachon was immediately alarmed.

"Is it serious and—where is Dr. Malmejac?" she cried.

"He is at his home and we are to stop at the home of Dr. Cremieux and bring him with us."

Georgette Parrachon hastily waved a taxicab to the curb. Albert Tomassone wheeled his heavy machine against the ancient stone flagging and noted the excited tears of the girl and the pale, calm face of the old woman in her long, black cloak, and concealing hat. He saw the girl snatch the child from the perambulator and clutch it fondly to her, heard her instructing him distractedly to fasten the perambulator to his cab. When finally he had secured the bulky carriage, it was the old woman who told him to drive first to the Rue Paradis, the home of Dr. Cremieux and thence to 185 Avenue du Prado, where the Malmejacs lived.

BEFORE the Cremieux home, the old woman spoke quickly to Georgette. "My dear, would you please go for Dr. Cremieux and I will hurry on to Dr. Malmejac's with the baby. You may come on to the house with Dr. Cremieux. He probably will show more haste if you are there, waiting for him. Madame Malmejac would want it that way."

"Yes, yes — anything to get the physician to Dr. Malmejac quickly," Georgette agreed. "And he will want to see the baby, too."

She slipped from the cab and ran rapidly up the walk to Dr. Cremieux's home. The concierge, surprised, argued briefly before admitting her. The taxicab, with the old woman and baby, Claude, inside and the carriage roped awkwardly against the spare tire in the rear, whirled away toward the Avenue du Prado.

Dr. Cremieux received Georgette with definite astonishment. "But Dr. Malmejac?" he protested. "Why, I left him outside the clinic only a few moments ago, and he was walking to his office."

"I know only what the woman who

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came for me told me," said Georgette.

Dr. Cremieux took his instrument case from an excited nurse. "Strange," he mumbled to himself. "Very strange. I can't understand why they didn't telephone me."

The doctor's chauffeur spanned the two miles from Dr. Cremieux's office to the Malmejac home with the throttle open. Police waved wildly at the speeding car, but subsided politely when they recognized Dr. Cremieux signaling aggressively to them from the tonneau. At the Malmejac home, Georgette and Dr. Cremieux fled up the steps to be confronted by an astounded and entirely whole Dr. Malmejac.

"Doctor!" exclaimed Dr. Cremieux.

"I believe I'm entitled to that honor," smiled Dr. Malmejac. "You seem excited."

Georgette, staring at Dr. Malmejac with unbelieving eyes, suddenly became hysterical with relief. "But the old woman—she told me you'd been hurt—she told me you'd been in an automobile accident and had been badly hurt—that I was to come home at once."

Dr. Malmejac stared at the girl. The smile fled and the color drained from his strong face. "The old woman? What old woman?"

"The old woman who brought the baby home—the one who came in the taxicab with the baby and the carriage." The girl was spilling her words frenziedly by now, terrifying suspicion clouding her agonized brain.

"Why, yes," cut in Dr. Cremieux. "The girl told me that an old woman brought her a message that you'd been hurt and had sent her for me while she took the baby home."

One pathetic, heart-breaking cry escaped Dr. Malmejac's lips, "Kidnapers!"

At the sound of this monstrous word, Georgette broke down completely. "Oh, I didn't know. I didn't know," she cried. "She was such an old woman — such a simple, kind old woman. I can't believe it."

II

EVEN in Marseilles, long the plague spot of the Mediterranean, the Malmejac crime was a shocking one. It came after the spectacular Lindberg case in America and it struck terror into the hearts of the simple French people of the town who wanted to live in peace and safety. It rang a warning gong in every community in France and Mediterranean Europe and the populace heard with fear and trembling the message that this most heinous of crimes had spanned the Atlantic and invaded their own lands with all its scheming and heartlessness and viciousness.

And that it had struck, first, in the better section of Marseilles, as free from crime in the past as the waterfront had been rife with it, was even more terrifying. The Marseilles police, from Préfect Couplet down to the youngest and humblest gendarme, were alive and resentful at the challenge and the French National Sûreté promised the utmost coöperation in blotting out the pestilence before it could gain a significant foothold as it had in America.

The excitement that swept Marseilles was a factor the gendarmerie had not reckoned with. Dr. Malmejac was a prosperous and respected young surgeon and he had been especially good to the poor, volunteering his services at all times and laboring long hours when pestilence or epidemic came to plague those who had no means of obtaining help otherwise.

The result of Dr. Malmejac's popularity was a mounting threat of mob

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violence. Crowds gathered in front of the Malmejac home and before the police stations. Other crowds collected at Amable-Charnot, at the scene of the kidnaping, and began their own hunts for the criminals, creating vast disturbances and handicapping the gendarmerie in their efforts.

Also, great crowds from Marseilles University, where Dr. Malmejac was a member of the faculty, gathered on their lawns and quads and formed determined searching parties and groups that proceeded to police headquarters and the various outlying stations and raised political issues with street corner debates and challenges. Never in the history of Marseilles had a crime caused so much commotion and never had the Préfect been faced with a more serious dilemma.

Préfect Couplet had one clue to work on. He could, and must, locate the taxi driver. While the Parrachon girl had not thought to take his number, she had retained a reasonably clear picture of him. Also, she knew that she had seen him before in the Amable-Charnot and had reason to believe that he made it a permanent stand.

"Give the story to the newspapers," the student mobs demanded of Couplet. "If he sees it in the papers, he'll turn up if he's innocent. If he's guilty, he will not turn up and it is best to know it now."

The student demand was based on the premise that the taxi driver had been in league with the old woman. Otherwise, they argued, why would he not have become suspicious when, after having been ordered to one address, he was sent to another, wherever that might have been? Any prudent man would have suspected this trick, especially when there was a baby in the custody of a woman as sinister looking as the Parrachon girl now was able to describe her strange visitor of the afternoon.

But Préfect Couplet gave the students no heed. He had his own method of operating. A kindly, shrewd man who had been through the mill of Marseilles' crime infested waterfront for many long years—and to whom criminology was a life work — he believed he knew his people better than the harassed, excited students.

Familiar with the Lindbergh case, he decided upon a coup. He suggested that Dr. Malmejac insert an advertisement in the daily papers instructing the kidnapers how to feed the child. But he wasn't to mention kidnaping. He was to phrase it another way. He did. He inserted an ad in all papers, reading, "Because of inadequate means of communication, will those caring for the doctor's child feed it carefully on a diet of cooked water, sugared milk, mashed potatoes and mashed bananas? This is most imperative."

This done, Couplet went to the Amable-Charnot with Georgette Parrachon. There they searched the curbs for the taxicab driver. The girl was positive she would recognize him. With the gendarmes hiding behind convenient concealment, she searched face after face, but she saw none that could have been the one in the fateful cab of that afternoon. Not until many hours later, when she was exhausted and near collapse from grief and excitement, did she find her man.

Then he came slowly out of the gloom of the night, moving cautiously, glancing from curb to curb, searching, apparently, for something. That he was searching for a place to park his cab did not occur to Georgette Parrachon. To her, his actions were furtive, as if he were returning to the scene of

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a crime as soon as possible to reconnoiter.

CAUTIOUSLY she signaled the hidden gendarmes and Couplet. As the driver drew his cab carefully to the curb, they sprang out, surrounded him, hauled him fiercely from his seat. The man, stocky and dark, with a pleasant, albeit frightened face and clear, straightforward eyes beclouded now with astonishment and fear, sputtered his alarmed protestations, demanding to know in a ribald combination of French, Italian and Spanish what it all meant.

Couplet refused to explain until they reached his office. There the man said his name was Albert Tomassone, that he had been a taxi driver for several years and that he recalled having picked up the child, the old woman and the girl who now accused him of the wretched crime of kidnaping. Spreading his hands in typical Latin excitation, he rattled off his denials and begged to be allowed to tell his story.

"The old woman—I have seen her before in the Amable," he explained. "She seemed gentle and harmless. After I left Dr. Cremieux's home, she told me to take her to the Pierre-Rouget Square, to a house at Number Five. I took her there and she told me I didn't need to wait, that she would be taken on from there by friends. I got down and took the carriage off my cab and she put the baby in it and wheeled it into the hallway of the tenement house there. It was a very good-looking apartment house and I thought nothing of it. She paid me and tipped normally and that is all I know. I went home then to sleep before coming out for the nightly trade. I know nothing of the kidnaping you talk about."

The man's story was straightforward and concise. His manner was honest and reliable and Couplet and Dr. Malmejac, who had joined in the quizzing, believed him. But they did not feel that he should be released until his story had been investigated. After all, it would be easy to fabricate such a story, obtain his release and then be off to join his confederates, if, indeed, he had confederates.

Tomassone, obviously eager to be of help, suddenly recalled that he had found something in the taxicab after he had left the old woman at the Pierre-Rouget. It was a handkerchief. He produced it. It was not, in truth, a handkerchief, but rather a small shawl of fine linen, too large for a handkerchief and not of the correct shape. The Parrachon girl said it was not hers. It must be the old woman's.

"It couldn't have been left in the cab by a previous fare, could it?" Couplet suggested.

"Impossible," Tomassone said. "I always inspect my cab carefully after each fare to avoid such difficulties. Everything I find I take to the company's lost-and-found bureau and I had intended taking this there when I checked out tonight."

Couplet and Dr. Malmejac inspected the shawl. Tomassone had wrapped it in a bit of rough newsprint paper to preserve it. There were no traces of laundry marks, initials or anything that would identify it. So far as a trace of the old woman was concerned, it was apparently worthless. But Dr. Malmejac had other ideas. Not an experienced criminologist, he was naïve enough to believe in the efficacy of bloodhounds, a strange fixation to find in a city of Marseilles' cosmopolitan population and, we might add, in all good faith, odors.

"I am told the bloodhounds can pick

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up a scent if they are allowed to sniff something that has belonged to the one we wished followed," he said to Préfect Couplet. "Couldn't we use this to put bloodhounds on this woman's trail?"

"Bloodhounds?" Préfect Couplet's jaw fell in astonishment. Then he began to laugh. "My friend, Dr. Malmejac, I realize that you are deeply distressed, but I'm afraid you've been reading too many American western stories. I haven't heard of bloodhounds being used to trail a suspect in a busy city in many, many years. Not even in America."

"But why not? It has been done."

"I'm afraid not. So many trails cross and recross, so many scents combine, so many odors defile the streets, the heavy miasma of gasoline is so pungent on the pavements, that it is a genuine impossibility for bloodhounds to follow a scent—even when you can find the bloodhounds."

"Préfect," Dr. Malmejac replied, "there are aspects to this crime that you may have overlooked. To begin with, this is my child and I want to try everything, no matter how far-fetched it may look to a practical law enforcement officer like yourself. Also, there are a great many people in the streets who are alarmed and ugly about this kidnaping. Not only here, but throughout the country there will be repercussions. I know. If I should tell the newspapers that we have the means of picking up a trail and the préfect of police refused to employ it. . . ."

Now the ordinary retort of a police chief, or his French equivalent, to a suggestion of this kind would have been pretty direct and significant. But the French police operate on the theory that their job and their duty is to serve and protect their citizens and that the citizen, so long as he isn't a suspect, and sometimes even when he is, is always right until proven otherwise. So to Préfect Couplet, Dr. Malmejac's sincerity and distress was a thing of transcendental importance, not only in the doctor's life, but in the préfect's, and he acted at once.

III

IT was necessary to obtain bloodhounds from Paris. By telephone, he discovered that the French Sûreté had hounds especially trained for work in crowded areas, such as cities. Stopping in his conversation to apologize to Dr. Malmejac for his colossal ignorance, he returned to the telephone to request that these dogs be sent to Marseilles by airplane, at once, with all costs charged to his office.

Operatives who had been to the Pierre-Rouget number came in now with little or no information. They had found the carriage, they said, but no one in the apartment house knew anything of it or of anyone answering the description of the old woman. She did not live there, it was said, and careful questioning of the residents revealed that no one answering the description had even visited there. The conclusion naturally was that she went into the hallway until Tomassone disappeared and then had slipped out and made her way to another part of town.

A widespread checking of the movements of all Marseilles taxicabs for the day began. Also, the conductors of tram cars and fiacre conveyances were checked to determine if that had carried an old woman answering the Nurse Parrachon's description and who would have been carrying a small child. Virtually every member of the city's police force was put on this check-up, including those on patrol duty, but nothing came of it. The woman ob-

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viously had not taken any sort of conveyance, or if she had, she had changed her make-up completely in those few seconds in the hallway.

Préfect Couplet was inclined to discount this latter theory and the possibilities involved in Dr. Malmejac's bloodhound suggestion grew more and more likely. After all, if she had elected to walk, the hounds would be able to trail her, provided they possessed the sleuthing endowments with which the Sûreté credited them. And they would be in Marseilles within a short time, now, and the trail could be taken up.

Fortunately, the hounds arrived late, so that the streets were comparatively empty. Couplet, the Parisian attendant for the hounds, Dr. Malmejac and a small squad of detectives, went to the Pierre-Rouget address. There they allowed the three hounds to sniff the scarf, after which they placed them at the spot where the old woman was said by Tomassone to have entered the apartment building. Promptly the dogs leaped into the apartment foyer, bayed avidly a few times, then wheeled and trotted out again, their sensitive muzzles close to the trail.

Off they went into traffic, mounted men holding back the few vehicles as they sped across the Pierre-Rouget, thence to Couronne Park, baying the while and straining at their leashes, and on through Couronne Park to Rue Roux-de-Brignoles, down the Brignoles to the Boulevard Notre Dame and off the Notre Dame through devious neighbor streets to the somewhat rachitic Rue d'Endoume. They turned into the Rue d'Endoume, continued down it for a few hundred feet, then suddenly began circling and a chagrined baying.

Repeatedly the custodian attempted to send them off in the direction the trail had been leading, but always they came back to this same spot, a barren section between houses and bayed and circled and then sat down and whined piteously. They had definitely come to the end of their trail, yet it would have been impossible for anyone to disappear in this place, halfway between two large old houses and in approximately the middle of the ancient sidewalk.

For hours they worked with the dogs, resting them and giving them food and then returning to the spot where the trail had chilled, but always with the same result. Early on the morning after the kidnaping, they gave it up and Dr. Malmejac returned to his home to find a letter that had been delivered by special messenger a few minutes before.

"Don't worry about your child," it said. "We already have seen your suggestion for feeding it and will adhere strictly to the diet. The child will be returned to you safe and sound if you pay the sum of 50,000 francs. Take good care not to notify the police or press of this operation or your child's life will be forfeit at once—"

Dr. Malmejac dropped the letter in terror. Already the police had been notified, of course, and certainly the press could not long ignore the near rioting that had been produced by a word of mouth dissemination of the news of the crime. And certainly the kidnapers would learn of it and then he would be too late—the baby already would have been slain to protect the kidnapers!

There was more to the letter, but he thrust it into his pocket and without sleep, went at once to the office of Préfect Couplet. Couplet, sleepless, too, greeted him. He read the letter through.

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"If you agree to turn over the sum named," the letter went on, "place in the *Petit Marseillais* of tomorrow, Saturday, a small advertisement couched in the following words and placed by the Havas agency: 'With 5,000 francs at my disposal, seeking lucrative employment.'"

DR. MALMEJAC dutifully inserted the advertisement as requested, so that it would appear the following morning, November 30, and then went into a huddle with Préfect Couplet.

"It is always more difficult to handle criminals who are as intelligent as this one obviously is," the Préfect said, "but there is this angle that may be helpful. Those of some refinement will be more likely to take care of the child as you suggested than a less educated type of criminal, who would be inclined to believe any food would do for a child, so long as it was food."

"At least, that's some satisfaction," Dr. Malmejac said. "To change diets suddenly might prove fatal for a child so young. But it only makes it possible for them to hold out longer."

Préfect Couplet smiled for the first time in many hours. "I'm not so sure of that," he said, softly. "It may be that they will be hoist by the petard of their own gentility, if we may go so far as to call it that. At least we can call it soft-heartedness, after a fashion."

Dr. Malmejac looked at him blankly. "I don't follow you—they may even now be terrified and ready to kill my baby."

"Hardly that. They are too intelligent. And if they feed the child as you have suggested, they will have to buy bananas. Many bananas. There are only a certain number of banana stores, or fruit stores, shall be say? They will have to patronize one of them. Let us hope they are able to buy the milk and bananas in the same store, which is likely."

Préfect Couplet paused to rap a cigarette lightly on his thumbnail. Dr. Malmejac stared at him, uncomprehending.

"It is unlikely that they will be in the habit of buying bananas," Couplet began again. "Somewhere, an old woman will suddenly start buying bananas in some definite quantity. Somewhere, no doubt," he said carefully, eyeing Dr. Malmejac, "in the vicinity of the Rue d'Endoume where our good dogs lost the trail."

Dr. Malmejac straightened suddenly. He leaped to the Préfect's side, hammering his back excitedly. "How simple!" he cried. "How perfectly simple. And here I was ready to challenge your shrewdness. Let's get out now and start checking on the shops in the d'Endoume section. It shouldn't take long."

"It may take longer than you think," the Préfect said. "Still, we may start now. But let our detectives do it. If uniformed men went out, or if you went out, or I, we might be seen and recognized by the kidnapers and then our game would be up and your child would no longer have its needed diet. They'd stop buying at once."

Within an hour, half a dozen detectives and four women were searching the d'Endoume district, questioning shopkeepers. From store to store they went, carefully checking up, stating that they were attempting to make a survey for a Fruit Dealers' Guild and that any noticeable increase in banana sales would be considered important. And if any new banana customers had appeared, that would be perfect because

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then they could contact these new customers and learn why they had become new banana customers.

The ruse worked perfectly, except for one angle. The merchants were willing to talk and rack their brains, but the entire d'Endoume district for blocks around the point where the dogs had lost their scent gave up no suggestion of an old woman suddenly become banana conscious. In fact, there were no new, or at least noticeably new, banana customers at all and the fruit survey doggedly expanded into an ever growing cycle of failure with the vanishing spot, or "X," as its hub.

Couplet, however, refused to be discouraged. This was his pet project and he determined to adhere to it. Dr. Malmejac, too, believed implicitly in it. Somewhere an old woman was buying bananas. When they found her, they would find his child. Or when they found the market where she was buying, they would find his child.

Gradually the cycle expanded. Ultimately it reached the Beaumont section of the city and spread into the Boulevard des Fauvettes, an old section with great, gloomy old houses and ancient markets and a bustle of strange, sinister peoples mixing with the honest laborers, small merchants and tradesmen who refused to be driven out.

As the cycle widened, so did the number of investigators increase. There were many men and women now and they missed no markets. They swept into the Boulevard des Fauvettes and began to question the merchants there, stolid, well-established men whose fathers and their fathers before them had been merchants there. They talked willingly—but there had been no old woman buying bananas lately.

It is odd that when defeat seems imminent or death most definitely impending, the break is most likely to come. So it was in the Boulevard des Fauvettes where men and women hunted eagerly for the old crone who bought bananas in new and definite quantities.

It was early in December, after the hunt had swung out into the Beaumont section, that an excited woman, pale and nervous, appeared at the door of Dr. Malmejac's home and demanded to see Dr. Malmejac. Two gendarmes met her there and when they attempted to restrain her, she became hysterical. She couldn't speak plainly, but she could mutter, over and over, and sometimes scream, the one word: "Bananas!"

Dr. Malmejac, returning to his home from a day with the préfect, heard the woman's cries.

"What's this?" he demanded. "Who is this woman and what is she saying about bananas?"

"It's nothing," the gendarmes assured him. "She's a little mad, Monsieur Doctor—that's all she can say—just 'bananas.'"

"That's enough," Dr. Malmejac said, crisply. "Bring her in at once."

Inside the doctor gave the woman a mild sedative and quieted her gently. Then he told her to speak. She spoke, rapidly, excitedly, darting frightened glances about her and then, seemingly reassured by the presence of the gendarmes, going on.

"I live in the Boulevard des Fauvettes, in the Beaumont section," she said. "Twice I have heard men asking about the bananas sold there, if there were any new buyers, if any old women were buying. They were very careless. But I know what they meant. I had read the advertisement in the paper and I knew your baby had been kidnaped. But I was afraid to speak

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to them. I didn't know who might be listening. But when I thought that baby was in danger—would be in danger unless I spoke, I had to speak."

The woman became half hysterical again and Dr. Malmejac gave her a small glass of wine.

"There's an old woman across the street from me. She's short and sharp-eyed and I haven't seen her since the day your baby disappeared, or the day I have heard it was taken. The blinds are always down, now, which is unusual, and she never goes outside."

Dr. Malmejac knitted his brows. "But the bananas," he insisted. "You intimated that she was buying bananas."

"She isn't," the woman protested. "It's her son. He's twenty-something and he goes out every day and buys bananas and takes them into the house with the curtains down and I never knew him to buy bananas before."

IV

DR. MALMEJAC met Inspectors Le Bouzec and Aubin at the entrance to the Boulevard des Fauvettes thirty minutes later. The woman hovered in the car and quailed as they drove down the old street. Then she pointed to a house, a large, dark, ancient house with the blinds down.

They drove on past, stopped the car and got out, leaving the woman with the chauffeur. She wanted to remain there, where she could be protected, until it was all over. She knew they would kill her if they escaped and she wanted to be protected.

Inspectors Le Bouzec and Aubin left Dr. Malmejac at the sidewalk and strode up to the door of the old house. Dr. Malmejac made as if to walk on. Inspectors Le Bouzec and Aubin were at the door. Aubin rapped smartly.

There was a deep silence, then a stealthy tread. Slowly the huge, old door opened, opened only a tiny way. A gnarled hand, white and small, showed on the edging.

Then a face, a white face with sharp eyes, an old face on the body of a dumpy, black garbed woman, showed.

"It's about the gas meters—we have come to inspect them," Inspector Aubin said.

The old woman peered at them through the narrow slit of the door. There was fierce suspicion in the snapping eyes. Her lips were drawn in a narrow line of gray blue.

"I'll tell my son," she finally said and her voice was harsh with indecision.

Then there came through that crack in the door, beyond the fierce old head, a sudden sharp cry, the age-old cry of the frightened and lonely child.

Like a flash, Aubin thrust his foot into the door and Le Bouzec hurled himself against it. The old woman was upset, cursing, on the floor.

There was a sudden angry shout, a male voice from another room. Aubin and Le Bouzec saw a young man run to a bed where a baby lay sprawled, nude, saw the man whip a revolver from his pocket and thrust it to the child's head.

"One move and I'll kill the baby," the young man cried, his face an awful mask of terror and ferocity.

Aubin started to raise his arms as if in surrender. Le Bouzec, too. Then something shot past them, a streak of incarnated fury.

The young man's pistol rattled across the floor. The man went down beneath the flailing fists of Dr. Malmejac and in a flash Aubin had the handcuffs on him and Le Bouzec had snatched up the baby.

Now Aubin found the old woman as

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the baby cooed and laughed in his father's arms. She had run and hidden in a closet, but Aubin brought her out. Her old tongue spewed profanity.

"We did it because we were so poor," she protested. "We had nothing to eat and we had to do it."

The officers found many, many francs in the house. They found evidences of easy, even luxurious living, and records of bank accounts for both the woman, who called herself Rolland, and her son, the man who'd threatened the baby, gave his name as Gilbert.

THE poverty alibi faded and so did the woman's claim to the name of Rolland. She proved to be Eugénie-Marie Cardin, 67 years old, with a long criminal record. The son turned out to be André Clement, her son by an early marriage, who had acquired somewhere in the neighborhood of $50,000 by cashing two worthless checks in a local bank recently.

How was he able to cash such big checks? Because he was a gentleman crook. He worked as a responsible municipal clerk in Rouen and the checks were perfect forgeries, drawn in favor of the City of Rouen against the account of the City of Marseilles.

Madame Eugénie Cardin received a twenty-year sentence because she was convicted of being an accessory to the forgeries as well as the kidnaping.

André Clement, the Rouen city clerk, kidnaper, potential baby killer and banana buyer?

A sentence worse than the guillotine—twenty years on the dreaded Devil's Island in the Caribbean, off the north coast of South America.

Dr. Malmejac and his wife and Préfect of Police Couplet of Marseilles have a favorite song to this day and it's small wonder. The song is "Yes, We Have No Bananas."

Blind Justice Indeed

MRS. HUTCHINGS of Maidstone, England, was a drunken drab, neglectful of home and husband. She beat her son until he got big enough to resist. This resistance seemed to redouble her rancor against her husband, a meek and inoffensive man. Friends advised him to quit her, but he never quite lost hope of her reformation. But, not being a man of stone, there were times when he could not avoid quarreling with her. So when she was found dead, it was assumed that he had killed her, and nobody blamed him much until it was learned that she had been poisoned.

He was tried, and was convicted solely on the prosecutor's contention that as Hutchings was the only person who had had access to the victim, he alone could have administered the poison. Frantically protesting his innocence, the man was hanged.

Then his son confessed that he had killed his mother. Never dreaming that the real cause of her death would become known, he had done it to put an end to his father's misery. Then when his father was accused, he lacked the courage to tell the truth.

He was not put on trial and his confession was ignored officially. Technically, judge and jury never make a mistake in England.

—*John L. Considine.*

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"Fight, Hannel!" he cried. "Fight or die!"

Michaelson Handled Revenge in His Own Way—the Short Way—and Taught Hannel, the Gentleman Gambler, That He Who Laughs Last Does Not Always Laugh Best

Blind Vengeance

By Herman Landon

HANNEL, dining alone in his private apartment over the gambling rooms, ate his filet mignon and sipped his vintage champagne with the air of a man whose palate has been trained to appreciate subtle flavors. Though his father had been a pickpocket and his mother an entertainer in low dives, his table manners were flawless and he wore his dinner clothes like a gentleman.

He was as proud of them as of his strong, slim figure, which he kept in trim by a daily hour of sword fencing in the gymnasium on the top floor of the old colonial mansion that served as his headquarters.

Gabe, the massive Negro, served him with the quiet efficiency of a Ritz headwaiter. Stiver, his favorite triggerman, stood guard outside the door, saving him the annoyance of intrusions. And in the suave and elegantly decorated rooms below, wheels and cards and dice were turning

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money into Hannel's hidden coffers.

At forty he was already a rich man. The gambling establishment was only one of his numerous enterprises.

Things had not always been going so well. Seven years ago his career had almost crashed and Hannel himself had come so close to the electric chair that he imagined he could smell the smoke pouring out of the electrodes. But he had escaped, thanks to political wire-pulling and the crafty devices of high-priced lawyers, and in short time he had climbed to the top again, a wiser and more cautious man.

A knock sounded just as he was spearing a delicate morsel of steak on his fork. He waved to Gabe, and the big Negro opened the door. Stiver walked in, blue-shaven and sleekly groomed. Except for his pale, deadly eyes, he looked more like a debonair young gigolo than a killer.

"The boys are back," the bodyguard reported.

Hannel took a sip of Cordon Rouge. The muscles in his lean, swarthy face tightened. He wiped his lips, which were oddly thick and loose in contrast to the rest of his features.

"They've brought Danny Ontario," Stiver added.

Hannel's dark eyes brightened. It was a hard brightness, like eyes gleaming in a dark jungle at night.

"Alive, I hope?"

"They hardly scratched him. The dumb cluck walked right into the trap you fixed up for him."

Hannel smiled with his loose, fleshy lips. There was something wolfish about that smile. Even Stiver, hardened killer though he was, felt a little shiver when he saw it. It was one thing to give a man a load of hot lead, but to kill him slowly and by inches was something else again. The big feller was funny that way. He enjoyed to hear 'em scream and see 'em wriggle. Maybe there was a screw loose in that smart brain of his, Stiver thought.

"Tell the boys to take Danny Ontario up to the gymnasium," Hannel directed.

Stiver nodded. He knew what that meant. The gymnasium had no windows. The doors and walls were sound-proof. Whatever happened up there, no screams would escape to the lower parts of the house and offend the delicate sensibilities of the fashionable throng at the gambling tables.

"Let them leave him there," Hannel added, speaking slowly, as if lifting his voice out of a deep reverie. "I'll attend to him a little later."

"Okay," said Stiver. He stared at his chief, then left the room. Hannel went on with his dinner, relishing each sip and mouthful as if they had suddenly acquired a more delicious savor. He lingered long and musingly over his coffee, brandy and cigarette. The gleam in his eye turned a little sultry, his thick-lipped smile took on a smudgy glow. He was a patient man. He could wait for his revenge like a cat at a mousehole.

He never forgot, never forgave. Three years had passed since he punished one of the two men chiefly responsible for the misfortunes that had brought him within the shadow of the electric chair, and it had been punishment such as no brain but Hannel's could have invented. But the second man, Danny Ontario, had eluded him all these years.

TAKING a cigar from the box Gabe offered him, he lighted it with care, tasted its rich aroma, and went out. Stiver, always his faithful shadow, was only a few steps be-

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hind him as he went up a long flight of stairs and unlocked a door. The door was two inches thick and swung heavily on its hinges, as if reinforced with metal. Telling the bodyguard to wait outside, he entered and locked the door on the inside. It was a long, narrow, windowless room with whitewashed walls and illuminated by a single large arc light in the ceiling. Half a dozen swords, the instruments of his favorite form of exercise, hung in scabbards on one side.

Slowly, as if taking a pleasant stroll, Hannel sauntered over to where a man sat in a plain wooden armchair of great size.

"Why, hello, Danny," he murmured pleasantly. "Nice to see you. Been waiting for you a long time."

Danny Ontario looked at him with cold blue eyes that could lash and sting. He was big, powerful, in his middle thirties, and his thick brown hair had reddish glints in it. His clothes were rumpled and he was puffing and sweating as if he had exerted a lot of bulldog strength in trying to tear free of the ropes that lashed him to the chair.

"Seven years, Danny." Hannel blew a thing wreath of smoke from his cigar. "I almost lost hope of ever seeing you again. Let me see. You and Harry Michaelson were the star snoopers for the Better Government Union. You had a lot of nerve and plenty of brains. You cracked down on me hard, you and Harry. You wrecked my business, sent some of my best pals to the big house, and almost landed me in the hot squat." Hannel pulled an injured face. "You hurt me plenty, Danny."

"Well," Danny Ontario growled, "you got even."

"With Harry Michaelson, yes." Hannel's voice was still pleasant, but suddenly there was a hot, gloating look in his eye. "It was almost three years ago tonight. He sat where you are sitting now, in the same chair. I didn't kill him, but maybe he wished afterward that I had. Instead I—" His voice dropped and became soft, as if caressing an agreeable memory. "Maybe you know what happened, Danny?"

"I know what you did to him." The blood had drained from Danny Ontario's face. There was a quiet deadliness in his tone. "And I know what you did to his girl, Rhoda Gale."

"Oh, yes, Rhoda." Hannel rolled the syllables slowly and pleasurably on his tongue. "Too bad! She just disappeared. Nobody knows what happened to her."

"I know. You killed her." Danny Ontario's voice was tight and choky. "You're going to pay for that, Hannel."

"Pay? Who's going to make me pay?"

"Maybe you didn't know she has a brother?"

"No, I didn't." Hannel shrugged delicately. "I'm curious about Harry Michaelson, though. I haven't seen him since that night. What became of him, Danny?"

"How should I know?"

"He was your pal. Well, never mind. What about yourself, Danny? You've been away a long time. Where you been keeping yourself?"

A LIFT of his powerful shoulder was Danny Ontario's only answer. Hannel puffed enjoyably on his cigar. "It's all right, Danny. You needn't tell. But I'm glad I found you at last." Some of the pleasantness went out of his voice. "You made a bad mistake when you

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tried to outsmart a man like me. Worst mistake you ever made, Danny."

Danny Ontario laughed in his face, a hard laugh that had an edge like steel. Hannel flushed beneath his dark skin.

"Laugh," he said, a rasp in his voice. "You won't be laughing long."

"That's all right," Danny Ontario retorted. "I can take it. What's a slug of lead between the eyes?"

Hannel's scowl relaxed. A smile spread from his thick lips to his eyes.

"A slug of lead?" he said softly. "A slug of lead between the eyes? Did you think it was going to be as easy as that?"

His dark eyes, glittering like flickers of lightning in a cloud, moved up and down the big figure in the chair. Then he turned away and went to the door with his easy, springy step.

"See you later, Danny," he said, waving his hand.

He stepped out and locked the door. Stiver, who had waited outside, gave him a curious look.

"Did you dust him off, boss?" he asked casually.

"Not yet," said Hannel absently, with pleasant visions glowing in his brain. "Not yet."

He went into his office, all polished mahogany, luxurious drapes, and costly carpets. He paced the floor and hummed softly to himself. He had not forgotten what Danny Ontario and Harry Michaelson had done to him. The injury, the humiliation and the hate had festered through the years. Harry Michaelson had already paid in full. Now it was Danny Ontario's turn.

Hannel stopped his pacing and stood staring into space. His face glowed like a fungus in a misty sun. Instead of laughing at him, Danny would soon be sweating and yelling. Pain such as no man could stand would wipe the cool, contemptuous look from his face. Oh, yes, Danny would pay. But this had to be something different, something new and subtle.

He cast about for an inspiration, but it would not come. An hour had passed when Stiver suddenly burst into the office.

"Just caught a guy sneakin' up the stairs," he reported excitedly.

"A guy?" Hannel's mind was still at work on the problem of devising a sufficiently satisfying punishment for Danny Ontario. "What kind of guy?"

"A blind guy," said Stiver breathlessly. "Both his lamps are out and he's wearin' black glasses." The dapper gunman paused. "It's—it's Harry Michaelson," he added in a shaky undertone.

"Eh?" Hannel jerked up his black, glossy head and stared. "You're crazy."

"It's him," Stiver insisted. "You can see for yourself."

"Oh, all right?" Hannel was still incredulous. "Bring him in and let me look at him."

Stiver was gone only a moment. Assisted by Gabe, the big Negro, he ushered a tall, slenderly built man into the office. Hannel's lips parted in astonishment as he saw him.

"Michaelson!" he muttered. Then, partly recovering from his surprise: "Frisk him, Stiver."

The gunman slapped the newcomer's clothing from collar to trouser cuffs, but no deadly weapons came to light. Hannel told Stiver and the Negro to get out. Long after the door had closed behind them, he kept gazing at the new arrival.

"So it's really you, Michaelson."

The visitor came forward. Though obviously blind, he moved with but slight hesitancy and without the use of

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a cane. His hair was white as snow, but he had a youthful figure and a keen, sunbrowned face. Stopping in front of Hannel, he removed his black, shell-rimmed glasses and exposed a pair of empty eye sockets.

"Remember?" he asked in a deep, vibrant voice.

For a moment Hannel stared at the unsightly holes, then nodded. Michaelson put the glasses back in place.

"Sure I remember," Hannel said. "What's happened to your hair? It's all white."

"You ought to know." Michaelson smiled—a grim, frosty smile. "It went white the night you murdered Rhoda Gale and gouged my eyes out."

"Oh, yes. Quite a night, wasn't it, Michaelson?" Hannel stroked his jaw with the air of a wolf licking his chops after a meal. "But you asked for it, you and Danny Ontario. You tried to roast me alive in the chair. All I did was poke your eyes out."

"And murder Rhoda Gale," said Michaelson quietly. "First you kidnaped her and brought her to this house. When I found out about it, I did a crazy thing—the sort of thing a man in love will do. I burst in here trying to rescue her, though I knew your gunmen were swarming all over the place. Something hit me on the head, and the next thing I knew I was in the gymnasium on the top floor, roped to a chair."

II

A FOGGY glow crept into Hannel's eyes. He remembered the scene so well. It had been one of the high moments in his life.

"You must have got your inspiration straight from hell," Michaelson went on. He had turned toward the desk, and Hannel could see only his back and his slim, slowly twitching fingers. "It wasn't so bad when you burned my eyes out with a red-hot poker. I could stand that. But when you brought Rhoda into the room, and when she began to scream—"

His voice caught in his throat. In fascination Hannel watched the long, twitching fingers. Then Michaelson was speaking again, speaking in a low, curiously steady voice.

"It was hell," he admitted. "I couldn't see what you were doing to her because my eyes were gone. To this day I don't know what fiendish way you took to kill her. She tried to hold the screams back for my sake, but they just burst out of her. I strained so hard against the ropes they cut gashes in my flesh. The scars are still there. I heard you chuckling to yourself. It seemed to go on for hours. Then the screams grew weaker, and finally they stopped. I knew she was dead."

Hannel gazed at the straight, motionless back of the blind man. Michaelson stood so still he might have died on his feet. Only the spasmodically moving fingers seemed alive.

"You might have killed me," Michaelson said after a long pause. "It would have been more merciful than what you did. But you didn't mean to be merciful. You finished off with a bit of refined cruelty. Instead of killing me, you turned me loose. You damned me to a lifelong hell. You knew those screams would ring in my ears till my dying day. You were right. They will."

"I know." Hannel's voice was scarcely above a whisper. There was a hot, smoky glow in his eyes. "I imagined they would. And you would be seeing things in your imagination, things you never saw with your eyes."

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He gave a low, hampered laugh. "You never told the police, Michaelson."

"That you put my eyes out?" Michaelson shrugged. "That was nothing. I couldn't tell them about Rhoda Gale. I was the only witness to the murder, and I hadn't seen a thing. That was smart, Hannel—sheer genius. I couldn't testify to something I hadn't seen. Your lawyers would have torn my story to rags. But I didn't want to go to the police anyway. I wanted to handle it my own way."

"Your own way?"

Michaelson turned around, leveled his black glasses at Hannel, and tapped a cigarette on his case.

"They say blind men don't smoke," he remarked. "That's rot. So is the idea that blind men can't see. There are millions of tiny nerves in their skin that pick up vibrations and turn them into mental pictures. That desk," turning toward it, "is dark brown mahogany. There's a lamp on it, and its pale green shade clashes with the blue in your imitation Syrian carpet."

Hannel's mouth parted. "Imitation?"

"Didn't you know?" Michaelson's lips curved in a slow, mocking smile. He took a few steps toward Hannel. "What's the matter, Hannel? Not afraid of a blind man?"

"Afraid?" Hannel tried to laugh, and he wondered why it sounded so flat. "Trying to be funny?"

"You're the funny one, Hannel." Michaelson advanced until they stood only a foot apart. "I can read you. My ears are just as keen as those millions of nerves in my skin. I can almost hear you think, and it makes me a little sick to listen."

"Yeah?" Hannel's thick lower lip sagged down. "And what do you hear?"

"PLENTY. It's queer how sadism and cowardice so often go hand in hand. You're scared, Hannel. You have a feeling that even a blind man may make trouble for you. You don't see what I can do. I'm all alone against your thugs and your killers, yet you have that fear. So you're going to kill me—kill me the long and slow way, as you always do."

Michaelson laughed, a half-pitying and half-contemptuous laugh. It made Hannel fume inside.

"You're dead right," he snapped.

"I knew it." The blind man sauntered over the office, and it was strange how he avoided bumping into the furniture. "Going to toss a coin to see who you kill first—me or Danny Ontario?"

Hannel glared at the man moving so coolly and carelessly about his office.

"Ontario isn't his real name," Michaelson added. "It's the place he came from. Didn't know that, did you? Not that it matters a hoot. Danny Ontario is my best friend. When I went away three years ago, Danny strung along with me. For three years he helped me and nursed me and watched me like a brother while I trained myself to get along without eyes. I trained my ears, my nose and all those queer senses that a person with eyes knows nothing about. We got back to town a month ago. I've watched you pretty closely since then."

"Watched me?"

"Yes, in ways that would surprise you. I know your hoods snatched Danny tonight and brought him here. I hurried over as fast as I could."

"Yes?" Hannel sneered. "And what do you think you're going to do?"

"Get Danny out of here, of course. Incidentally I'm going to kill you."

Hannel gulped. The flesh bulged in

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two livid patches over his cheekbones. He gave a thin, limp laugh.

"*You* are going to kill *me?*"

"Why not?" Michaelson drawled. "What's so strange about it? You certainly deserve to die, but the law can't reach you. You're too smart for that. So I'm going to kill you."

Hannel gaped and glowered. There was something baffling and disturbing about the blind man.

"You poor lug!" he gibed, jerking an automatic pistol from his pocket. "Why, I could plug you right now."

"You probably could," Michaelson admitted, stopping his pacing and turning toward the leveled pistol. "But you aren't going to do it. It isn't your way. Your way is the long, slow way."

Hannel stared at him a moment, then lowered the weapon.

"That's right. The slower the better." His look of rage and bafflement melted in a loose-lipped grin. "We'll have a drink while I think about it."

LAUGHING softly to himself, he opened a cabinet and took out bottle, siphon and glasses. He poured two drinks and gave one to Michaelson. The blind man lifted the glass. His black lenses caught the glints of the light amber liquid.

"Here's to death!" he said.

"Slow death," Hannel said.

They drank. Michaelson emptied half his glass and set it down with a sigh of satisfaction.

"Nice whisky," he commented. "Best I've tasted in a long time. So you want to die slowly, Hannel?"

"It isn't me that's going to die," Hannel laughed. He was in good humor again. "It's you."

"I think not. I'm going to kill you, but I don't kill the way you do. I don't rope a man to a chair and torture him to death. I like to give him a chance for his life."

"Nice and generous of you," Hannel mocked.

"Yes, you ought to appreciate it. You don't know it, but I could have killed you a dozen times in the past month." Michaelson finished his drink. His musing smile had an edge of grimness. "Feel pretty sure you're going to kill me, don't you?"

"Nothing's surer!"

"Then you might grant a doomed man a small favor. Let me choose my own kind of death. You can make it as slow and awful as you like."

"Yes?" Hannel's black eyes contracted suspiciously. "And what kind would you choose?"

Michaelson ran his fingers through his thick white hair and appeared to consider the matter.

"You used to be quite a fencer, Hannel. I suppose you've kept it up?"

"Sure. I practice every day. Why?"

"It's a great sport. I'm sorry I never took it up. Don't know one kind of sword from another. The advantage would be all on your side. Still—"

"Advantage? What the hell do you mean?"

"I'm suggesting," said Michaelson with a quiet smile, "that we go up to your gymnasium and have a gentlemanly sword duel. I'd rather kill you that way, I think. Duelling is against the law, but it isn't really looked upon as murder."

Hannel's eyes bulged out. He stared at Michaelson's head. Maybe Michaelson's mind had cracked the night his hair turned white.

"You're crazy! A sword duel with a blind man?"

"Why not? It will be a novelty. You will experience a brand new sensa-

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tion—and you're a glutton for sensations."

A smile flirted with Hannel's lips. The novelty appealed to him, and perhaps he would enjoy the sensation. But Michaelson must be crazy to propose such a thing, or else he had a trick up his sleeve. Still, how could he play a trick? A blind man, no matter how keen he might be otherwise, would stand no chance against a fencer as light on his feet and deft with his hands as Hannel. Not unless—

Hannel laughed. He saw the catch now. Michaelson must be goofy to think he could put it over.

"What do you say?" Michaelson asked.

"I say it's a dumb play," Hannel replied in his most pleasant voice. "Danny Ontario is up there in the gymnasium, and you probably know it. You think you're going to cut him loose as soon as you get a sword in your fist, and then I'll be alone against the two of you. Not so hot, Michaelson."

The blind man said nothing, but Hannel thought he saw a frown of chagrin on his lean, sunburned face.

"No, not so hot," he repeated. "I carry a gun, and it isn't for ornament. Before Danny could snap into action, he would get a hot slug in one of the justly celebrated fleshy parts."

"So that's out," said Michaelson glumly.

"YES, that's out. It's—" Hannel broke off. The light of a temptation shone in his eyes. A novelty, a brand new sensation! It would be all of that. The only trouble was that it would be over too quickly. But why not drag it out? Instead of the one deadly thrust, there could just as well be a great many light stabs and slashes—a hundred of them, a thousand!

"No," Hannel said slowly, "it isn't out. It isn't such a bad idea, after all. You've tempted me, and I can't resist. Are you still game?"

Michaelson's sightless eyes strained toward him as if to read his thoughts. His lips shaped a tight, grim smile.

"It was my idea," he declared with a shrug. "I won't back out. You will just hack me to pieces, but I might as well go that way as any other."

"There are worse ways," Hannel murmured. "Ready?"

They left the office and started up the stairs. When they were half way up Michaelson turned, sniffed, and leveled his black glasses at Stiver, who was following behind.

"Lilac-scented hair lotion!" he muttered disdainfully. "I hate the stuff. Couldn't you leave your nursemaid behind, Hannel? Of course, if you're afraid—"

"Afraid?" Hannel winked a humorous eye at the bodyguard. "Our temperamental friend thinks I'm afraid, Stiver. Go have a drink at the bar."

The bodyguard left them. Hannel unlocked and opened the heavy gymnasium door. When they were inside, he locked it again and dropped the key into his pocket. Michaelson advanced a few steps into the long, narrow room, then paused. His face was tense and pale under the arc light. His nostrils dilated and his sightless orbs turned toward the rear of the white-walled chamber, traveling in an almost straight line to the chair by the farther wall.

Hannel's mouth twitched. He saw the heave of the blind man's chest and knew what he was thinking and feeling. No doubt Michaelson's mind was turning back to the memorable night

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three years ago when he had been roped to that same chair. His eye sockets had been scorched and bleeding wounds. He had strained horribly against the ropes as he heard Rhoda Gale's cries. That was the night his hair had turned white.

There was someone else in the chair now—Danny Ontario. Michaelson's black glasses were trained on him as if he apprehended his presence. His nostrils dilated, his lips quivered.

Danny bent forward as far as the ropes would permit. He stared at Hannel, at the blind man.

"You!" he cried. "Harry Michaelson!"

"Yes, Danny," said Michaelson quietly. "Didn't you know I'd come for you? Afraid I can't do much good, though. Hannel is too smart for me."

"You're crazy!" Danny groaned. "You shouldn't have come here. You—"

"Don't get excited," Hannel cut in. "You're going to be entertained, Danny. Something entirely new. Ever see a blind man fight a sword duel?"

DANNY Ontario's big shoulders jerked against the ropes. A horrified sound arose from his great chest. "Sword duel?" he cried in sudden rage. "It'll be butchery!"

"All my fault, Danny," Michaelson told him. "I suggested it. Thought I had a neat surprise to spring on Hannel, but he got on to it. Just keep cool."

Danny's rugged face paled by degrees in the great white illumination shed by the arc light. He darted a murderous look at Hannel, but Hannel was gazing smilingly at the blind man.

"Shall we strip to the waist?" he inquired pleasantly.

"Suits me," said Michaelson with a shrug, starting to remove his coat while Hannel threw off his dinner jacket and unbuttoned his dress shirt. Soon they were naked to the midriff. Hannel's eyes flickered gloatingly over Michaelson's sun-tanned shoulders and chest. He went to the wall and took down two of the swords hanging there. Keeping his hand on the gun in his hip pocket, he handed them to the blind man.

"Take your choice," he said in a thick, muffled voice.

Michaelson took a sword in each hand. He hefted them clumsily, made a few awkward little slashes with them, then kept one and returned the other to Hannel. From the back came the sounds of loud breathing and creaking of ropes.

"You damned butcher!" Danny Ontario bawled, glaring at Hannel. But Hannel did not hear him. He gazed in fascination at Michaelson's brown chest and rippling muscles. Slowly, sword in hand, the blind man moved away from him, turning casually toward the chair by the wall on which Hannel had hung his dinner jacket. His nostrils worked as if trailing a scent.

"Queer how body odors cling to clothes," he said in a careless drawl. "Maybe you should bathe oftener, Hannel."

Hannel scowled, then cried out in astonishment. With a quick move the blind man reached the chair. His left hand dipped into the side pocket of the dinner jacket. For an instant he held the hand aloft, and something gleamed metallically in the light—the key with which Hannel had locked the door. Then, smiling quietly, Michaelson dropped the key in his trouser pocket.

Danny Ontario gave a dull, flabbergasted exclamation. Hannel stood

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stunned, speechless. It was a bewildering thing Michaelson had done, a crazy thing. At last he found his voice.

"Why in hell—did you do that?" he stuttered.

"Can't you guess?" Michaelson smiled and traced designs on the floor with the point of his sword. "So you won't get away from me, of course."

From the rear came Danny Ontario's dull, astounded mutter. Hannel's mouth hung open.

"Get away—from *you*?"

"I was afraid you might try," said Michaelson calmly. "You can't escape now, with the door locked and the key in my pocket. I remember this room." His mouth tightened. His short, bitter laugh rasped in the silence. "I'll never forget it. There are no windows. The walls are sound-proof and the door reinforced with metal. You sent your bodyguard away. Won't do you a bit of good to shout for help."

III

"HELP?" Hannel stared groggily at the tall, lean figure with the glasses. He gave a weak laugh, shrugged. Plum crazy, of course. Only a lunatic would talk and act that way. It didn't matter about the key. He could fish it out of Michaelson's pocket after it was over. "Let's get on with it," he snapped. "Ready."

"I'm ready," Michaelson said, backing away a few paces. "What about yourself, Hannel? Ready to die?"

"Eh?" Hannel's mouth dangled open again. Dull rage smoldered in his veins, rage against the blind man and rage against himself for being so queerly impressed by the ravings of a lunatic. "Cut the funny cracks," he snarled, tightening his grip on the sword. "It's you that's going to die."

"No, Hannel, it's you." The blind man's words came clear-clipped and icily calm. "I've got you now. It was a trick, but not the kind I let you think it was."

Hannel gasped again. A change had come over the blind man's face. It was hard and terrible, and it cast a strange, sense-drugging spell on Hannel. For a moment he stood wavering under it, torn between a dull fury and a blind, creeping fear. Then he shook himself, gave a hoarse laugh. Trick? Michaelson could play no tricks on him. He could only die.

"All right!" he bellowed. "Come on with your tricks!"

"Let's go!" Hannel snarled, easing his muscles for the attack. He laughed again. Child's play! But he mustn't end it too quickly. He would just sting and stab until—

A dull, half-choked cry burst from his throat. He saw it in a sharp, staggering flash—Michaelson leaping lithely from the floor, swinging his sword in a swift upward curve, lunging at the big arc light in the ceiling. Then a splintering crash, a shower of glass rattling like huge hailstones, a sudden swoop of darkness, and then Michaelson's cold, mocking laugh.

"Fight, Hannel!" he cried. "Fight or die!"

The words cut like knives through the deepest, heaviest darkness Hannel had ever known. They jabbed at his brain, rousing it from its stupor. So it had been a trick after all. Such a simple trick too.

"Good boy, Harry!" came Danny Ontario's excited and hoarse-voiced applause from the back. "Now cut these damned ropes and let me at the swine!"

Hannel strained to tiptoes. The

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darkness was like a sea of blackest jet. He could not detect the faintest flicker in it. Sword in hand, he waited for Michaelson to speak so he would know where to find him.

"Not yet, Danny," came the blind man's hard, quiet voice. "This is my fight and—"

Hannel laughed and lunged straight at the voice speaking out of the darkness. He struck fast and fiercely, struck many times, but it was like striking at shadows. No form of flesh and blood stopped his savage thrusts. He fell back, waited, hot fury and cold fear running in his veins.

SUDDENLY he screamed and doubled over. He felt a sharp sting between the shoulder blades. Michaelson, moving in utter silence, had attacked from behind. It was only a slight cut, but he cried out in fright and pain. He heard Danny Ontario's laugh.

"Give it to him, Harry!" Danny cried.

Hannel swung around. His body was shaking. Cold sweat oozed from his forehead. He cursed silently. He must get a grip on himself. He must fight or die!

"What's the matter, Hannel?" It was Michaelson's cold, taunting voice. "We're even now. I'm no fencer at all. You're a good one. But I'm at home in the dark—thanks to you!"

The words cracked menacingly in the darkness. Hannel snarled and sprang at the point where he had heard Michaelson's voice. He slashed savagely with the sword, slashed at emptiness. Michaelson, the shadow man, kept eluding him. Michaelson, the sightless man who was at home in the dark!

A point of cold steel pricked his neck, and he let out a scream. Shaking and whimpering, he shrank back. Suddenly he stood still and silent. Even his breath was muffled. He remembered something—his gun! Stifling the spiteful laugh that wanted to squeeze out through his clenched teeth, he lay the sword down at his feet and pulled the pistol from his pocket. His heart pounded in hot, savage glee. The shadow man might elude his sword, but he could not dodge a bullet.

Silently he stole back until he felt the wall behind him. His finger was on the trigger. Now let Michaelson come! He was a good shot, one of the best in town, and at close range he could aim by ear. A light footfall or the sound of breathing was all he needed to locate his target. But he must wait until there was no chance of missing, until the blind man was just a little more than a sword's length away.

He waited, strained his ears. The only sound in the blackness was the creaking of Danny Ontario's ropes. Then, after a long wait, there came another sound, and Hannel stiffened and crouched. Footsteps were coming toward him, light as the glide of paws in a jungle. They stopped, and he could picture Michaelson's nostrils working, trying to smell him out. There was something weird about it, something inhuman, a suggestion of a beast waiting to leap on its prey.

He locked his teeth to keep them from chattering. The suspense was a torment. It pulled his nerves into tight, twinging knots. His body was shaking again. It wouldn't do. He must pull himself together for the attack that was coming. It came in a moment, but not the way he had expected, slowly and creepingly, but with

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a wild rush. He yelled as a sharp edge slashed his left arm, and his finger convulsed on the trigger. Four times the gun roared and four angry flashes stabbed the darkness.

"Cheat!" The blind man's voice rose cool and contemptuous above the rumbling echoes. "That your idea of a sword duel?"

Hannel shook with pain and a cold fear that immersed him like icy, rising waters. He fired again, fired blindly, then screamed as a sharp point prodded his shoulder. Crazed with terror and rage, he lifted the gun to fire his last bullet, but a glancing stroke scraped skin from his chest and sent him reeling back against the wall.

HE shuddered, gnashed his teeth. Salty sweat trickled into his wounds. They were not very deep, but they stung and throbbed and bled. He felt dizzy and feverish. There was a dull roaring in his head.

"Ready for more, Hannel?" came Michaelson's chill, taunting voice.

Hannel's answer was a ragged groan and a curse. Damn Michaelson, the man who could move like a ghost in the dark, elusive and untouchable, striking as he pleased! He leaned weakly against the wall. Fear was creeping over him like a paralysis. Any moment Michaelson might attack again, swoop down on him like a night-bird on its helpless prey. The next time, perhaps, he would strike to kill. It was a wonder he hadn't done so already. Instead of dealing out a few minor cuts and slashes, he could just as easily have struck a mortal blow.

Hannel lifted his head. It was full of shrill, jangling noises, but a single clear thought stood out amidst the confusion. He gave a flat laugh. So that was it! A slow death, a steady hacking and cutting, was what Michaelson had in mind for him. Michaelson meant to do to him exactly what he, Hannel, had meant to do to Michaelson. A shudder shook his smouldering body. A slow death—a thousand stabs and slashes! Hell! He couldn't stand that. He would rather—

He drew himself erect, gave a hoarse laugh that had a maniacal ring in it. He would fool Michaelson, the shadow man. He would cheat Michaelson of his fun. It was a lucky thing he hadn't wasted his last bullet. He laughed again as he lifted his gun. It felt cold as ice in his clammy hand. Now—

The shot crashed like thunder on the stillness. A little scream, a groan, the thud of a falling body. A gasping, a twisting, then silence.

"Good Lord!" Danny Ontario cried. "What happened?"

Michaelson went over and started to slash the ropes with his sword.

"Hannel shot himself," he said. "I was hoping it would happen that way. Let's go now. I know a safe way out."

Danny Ontario climbed out of the chair. There was a creaking in the darkness as he stretched his stiff muscles.

"Thanks, Harry." He spoke simply but feelingly. "You certainly saved me from a lot of hell tonight."

"I'm glad," said Harry Michaelson, giving him a friendly slap on the shoulder. He added with a little catch in his voice: "I have a feeling somebody is smiling tonight."

"Yes," Danny Ontario said, speaking a little dreamily for such a big man, "I'm sure she is."

The blind man took the arm of Rhoda Gale's brother and guided him through the darkness to the door.

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DETECTIVE SHORT

Otto didn't know what was going to happen

Not Enough Blood

By Davis Dresser

ABRUPTLY, John Hendley knew he was going to kill his wife. He averted his gaze from her face as the guilty knowledge pounded through his brain. Her voice continued to flow across the table to him, but the words were dimmed by a violent buzzing in his ears.

It was not, Hendley realized, a sudden decision. Recognition had come to him with shocking abruptness, but he knew it to be a decision that had been

The District Attorney's Investigator Got His Big Chance to Break This Case, When the Killer Failed to Make His Murder Bloody Enough

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solidifying for months—ever since Belle returned from her unexplained week-end trip to Metropole.

There was something satisfying to Hendley in being able to sit across the table from Belle and know that her life was utterly dependent upon his whim.

It brought him a feeling of certitude and power. The buzzing went away from his ears and a mood of calmness settled upon him. He was able to look into her eyes with no inner consciousness of guilt. He listened to her even flow of words with a grimly detached sense of personal satisfaction: "I've reached the end of my rope, John. If you won't sell out and take me away I'll go away by myself." Her voice was low and controlled, shading off into a note of desperation.

John Hendley hunched a little lower in his chair. The flickering yellow glow of a kerosene lamp accentuated the bitter lines of his gaunt face—as it softened and made beautiful the pleading countenance of his wife, twenty years his junior.

He spoke harshly, with a new note of rasping authority: "We'll say no more about it. You married me and came here of your own free will and accord."

"I did. And I've been patient, John. But I can't go on being patient forever. It's too much to ask of any woman. I'm becoming old and drab—and I'm still young. You can well afford to sell the farm and move into the city. It isn't as though we were poor and had to live here."

"Into the city?" he snarled. "Where you would wear fine clothes and find companions more to your liking, I suppose?"

Belle said steadily: "Yes, John. I want decent clothing and friends."

The devil of anger and jealousy seized Hendley. He wanted Belle to go on. He wanted her to go on until she *made* him kill her.

"I'm not enough for you, then? You're not satisfied with your husband for companionship?"

Belle shook her head wearily. "You distort everything I say to fit your own jealous interpretation. You'll drive me to do something desperate if you keep on."

Hendley laughed hoarsely, savagely. He could kill her now with his two hands. He glanced at them furtively as they lay clenched on the table. They seemed to be alive, charged with an external force that would delight in tightening them about Belle's soft throat. Corded muscles stood out as each finger writhed as though eager to get on with it.

He moved his hands to his lap and fought to control them. Not here. Not now. Queerly enough, it seemed that his subconscious mind had known he would reach this decision months ago and had been planning how best to accomplish wife murder.

IT was a matter for careful planning and calm thinking. Not tonight. Not while he and Belle were alone in the isolated farmhouse. The thought of murder was sweet to him, but not at the price of his own life.

He needed time for planning. He must control his hands and his passions. He spoke across the table with heavy suavity: "It's you who bring up the jealous interpretations, Belle. How can I trust you after you deliberately went to some man in Metropole?"

His wife flung out work-roughened hands despairingly. "Must we go over that again? You don't believe the truth."

"I believe what I know. You left my

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home without my consent or knowledge and came creeping back without an explanation two days later."

"I've given you the only true explanation." Belle lifted her head proudly.

"That you went to Metropole just to sleep alone in a hotel bed and go alone to a movie?"

"Anyone with an ounce of intuition would know that was reason enough after enduring the solitude here for three ghastly years." Belle's self-control was slipping away. Tears misted her eyes.

Hendley clenched his hands under the table and goaded her on: "Now, we're coming to the truth of it. Ghastly years, eh? They wouldn't have been ghastly if you'd loved me as a wife should. You hate me! Why don't you say it? You've hated me ever since the night we were married. I've seen it in your eyes. Why don't you say it?"

His wife stood up with a little sigh. She was a smooth-browed, full-bosomed woman of twenty-five.

"I'm beginning to hate you, John. You'll drive me to it. I can't endure another month. I'll leave you here alone, if that's what you insist on doing."

She turned away from him and went slowly down a dark passage to the rear bedroom she occupied alone.

John Hendley sat at the cluttered table and stared after her without movement. His sunken eyes beneath thatched brows glowed with an unholy light.

She would leave him. She was beginning to hate him and she would leave him. He wet parched lips with the tip of his tongue and nodded his head slowly. She didn't know how truly she spoke. He would attend to her departure.

She wanted to get away from the farm, did she? All right. Tonight, perhaps.

No. Not tonight. That would be a fool's way. John Hendley was not a fool. He had never before planned murder, but he set about the problem with the same careful exactitude he employed in all his problems.

He knew the theory of police and detective writers that there is no such thing as the perfect crime. Fools! His would be the crime which they said could not be.

HE sat quietly hunched over the table, a brooding atmosphere of evil seeming to hover over him as he studied methods of murdering his wife and discarded them.

None of them were perfect. He would not be satisfied with less than perfection. For a time he clung to the idea of making her death appear accidental. There were many ways in which a farm woman might conceivably meet her death accidentally, but always he was brought up against the fact that suspicion would inevitably be directed toward him, no matter how she died.

The entire countryside had scoffed and gossiped when he brought Belle from the city as his bride a little over three years ago. It had been common talk that no good would come of the incongruous mating. He knew it was now common talk that they did not get on well and that she had threatened to leave him if he did not sell the farm and move to Metropole.

He knew, too, that he was hated by all his neighbors. He enjoyed their hatred—went out of his way to foster it.

It branded him as a man apart, and this was to his liking.

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But he found that it complicated his problem now. A wave of bitter suspicion would inevitably follow his wife's death under any unnatural circumstances.

The core of the problem, as Hendley saw it, was to provide the authorities and those who hated him with a victim to serve in his stead.

By that lack, he realized, every so-called perfect crime fails to attain perfection. He got up and paced the floor as he followed the thought through to its logical conclusion.

The one positive way to turn the finger of suspicion away from him was to point it unmistakably at another —*and at another who could not speak in his own defense.*

A plan matured while he paced the floor, his bent, ungainly figure casting misshapen shadows upon the unpainted walls of the old house.

A sinister plan, diabolic in conception and simple in execution. He went to his own bed an hour later with each detail ingeniously contrived to meet every possible contingency.

II

IT was bitter cold at daybreak the next morning. Belle Hendley shivered uncomplainingly in the draughty kitchen while fat pork sizzled in the pan and a mixing bowl of pancake batter stood ready for her husband when he came in from milking.

She greased the griddle with a bacon rind when his step sounded on the walk outside, and was ladling out batter when he came in and set the buckets of milk down for her to strain and separate later.

An ugly smile twitched the corners of his thin mouth as he regarded her. Too good to cook his breakfast, was she? He nodded his head somberly and stalked past her to the small table where she had served his breakfast every morning of their married life with the exception of the Saturday and Sunday when she had escaped to Metropole.

He wolfed his food down without speech, as always, while she hurried back and forth between table and range, bearing crisp pancakes and hot coffee as fast as his plate and cup were emptied.

There was no pity in his heart; no weakening of his resolution, which had been strengthened by a sound night's sleep.

He got up after he had finished breakfast, stood before the range and said irritably: "The back yard's getting in a terrible mess again. I see where one of the chicken coops needs mending."

Belle brushed a straggling lock of hair away from her forehead and agreed with him wearily. "I've been meaning to get at it, but it just seems like I don't get the time."

"You have enough to do," he told her gruffly. "I'm driving over to Thompson's place today to see about that bull he's got for sale. I'll stop by Otto Konger's house and send him over to do a day's work while I'm gone."

"Not Otto!" Belle said breathlessly. "You know he frightened me the last time he was here. They say he's not quite right in his head, and something's always missing from a house when he does odd jobs."

"Women's talk," Hendley told her with a scowl. "Your imagination frightened you. Old Otto wouldn't hurt a flea."

"But I'm afraid of him," Belle pleaded. "And Mrs. Mooney caught him snooping around her house the last time he worked there."

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"Nonsense." John Hendley spoke with decision. "Otto's a little off, but he's all right. The only handy man in these parts. I'll send him here as I go by."

He moved toward the kitchen door while Belle stood aside helplessly. About to stride out, he paused and turned back to a small storeroom where a double-barrelled shotgun stood in the corner.

"Might see some ducks on Simmon's pond," he explained gruffly, shouldering the gun and going out to the barn, where he hitched a team to the farm wagon and drove away without further farewell.

Otto Konger came cheerfully at ten o'clock, presenting himself at the back door for instructions from Belle. He was a red-faced, blue-eyed, giant of a man, slightly daft, it was universally agreed, but a handy man for the yard and repair jobs.

Belle hated him and was repelled by him.

It seemed to her that his small eyes were cunningly alert as she stood in the kitchen door and told him what her husband wanted done.

Otto grunted docile agreement, and Belle went back into the house to busy herself with an endless round of household tasks, relieved only by her increasing determination to somehow force John to give up the farm and move into the city, where she could be happy.

JOHN HENDLEY returned earlier than either his wife or Otto expected him. The drive up to the barn was through the rear pasture, obscured from view, from the house, by a tall row of poplars.

His movements were deliberate and measured after descending from the spring seat of the wagon.

He hitched his team to a post and lifted down the shotgun from its place beside the seat. White cotton gloves were on his hands.

Moving around the barn with no effort at concealment, he came upon Otto hammering busily on the chicken coop. Otto looked up and nodded a cheery greeting. Hendley went past him toward the kitchen door without slackening his pace until he came upon Otto's box of carpenter tools standing near the walk.

He paused to pick up a keen-edged hatchet from the box, strode on purposefully toward the house with shotgun on his shoulder and hatchet in hand.

Inside the kitchen door Hendley leaned the shotgun against the wall and laid the hatchet on the stove. He lifted down a dusty cigar box from a shelf above the stove, seized the small handful of crumpled bills inside, and let the box fall to the floor.

The door between the kitchen and living room was tightly closed. He moved stealthily back to the outer door, opened it and beckoned to Otto.

The handy man lumbered to his feet and came obediently to the door. Hendley stepped aside, grasping the muzzle of the shotgun with one hand and holding out the bills to Otto in the other.

The laborer took the proffered money mechanically but uncomprehendingly, opening his mouth to ask a question as his blunt fingers closed over the bills.

He opened his mouth too slowly to get the question asked. Hendley stepped away from him toward the outer door, swung the shotgun up into Otto's belly and blasted away with both barrels.

The handyman swung about slowly, toppled to his knees with hands outstretched as though in supplication,

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blank amazement spreading over his broad face. He went down to the floor with softly exhaled breath, his ponderous figure slowly settling on his back.

There was a scream inside the house, and swiftly running footsteps. Hendley called loudly: "Belle! Come quick!" while he leaped to the stove and gripped the hatchet in gloved hand.

It was a step onward to the closed door leading from the living room. He stood against the wall with lethal weapon upraised.

His wife burst through the door and stopped short with a scream at sight of Otto's body.

Hendley swung the hatchet before she knew he was there. The keen blade grazed her ear and sank deep into the soft flesh of neck and throat, cutting cleanly through spinal vertebræ and jugular vein.

An awful shriek ended in a horrible gurgle of death. Blood spurted strongly from the gaping wound as she fell forward. Hendley leaped behind the shelter of the door to avoid the spray and watched, fascinated, as his wife's failing heart pumped up a stream like a faltering fountain, throwing the damning evidence of guilt upon the floor around Otto and covering his face and chest with the red badge of murder.

Hendley was grim-faced and sure of himself when he stepped from behind the door to view the scene of double murder with approval. He dropped the hatchet near Otto's right hand, and was pleased to see that the stiffening fingers still held the crumpled bills.

Each detail fitted perfectly into his careful plan. Even to the effect that Otto had fallen face up and had thus received the spray of Belle's death blood on the front of him, where it would be if he had wielded the hatchet.

Luck had been with John Hendley. He gritted his teeth as he now realized that perfection had depended upon luck. Had Otto fallen face downward it might have been difficult to explain to the authorities how the blood had come upon his back.

But there was no use thinking about that. Hendley surveyed the scene a long moment and found everything exactly as it should be. The veriest fool could not fail to reconstruct the crime.

Otto's own hatchet on the floor, covered with only his own fingerprints; the money still clutched in his hand as it had been when Belle surprised him and had been killed by him. Perfection.

Hendley circled the bodies carefully to the back door, then strode forward hastily to bend over his wife as any man would be expected to do under like circumstances.

Satisfied that everything was as he would have it, Hendley hurried away across the field to summon help and tell his version of the atrocious crime.

III

"THAT'S the way it was, Sheriff." John Hendley wiped sweat from his brow awkwardly, facing Sheriff Armstrong and a deputy in the living room.

"I didn't have time to think," Hendley went on. "There was Otto coming at me with the bloody hatchet and just a glimpse of my poor wife on the floor behind him. He was a crazy man if ever I saw one."

Sheriff Armstrong was a large, rawboned man. He rubbed his chin and nodded sympathetically. "Hate to ask you these questions, John, but we want to get the straight of it."

"Of course." Hendley started apprehensively and looked toward the

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kitchen as a photographer's flashlight exploded. "Who's that?"

The sheriff chuckled. "Young Sam Wallace. He's the crime expert Metropole hired from New York. Hell-bent on taking pictures and fingerprints, he is. Even when it's plain as the nose on your face that Otto Konger only got what was coming to him."

"Saved the State a hanging bill," the deputy agreed. "I been knowin' Otto was goin' off his nut one of these days."

"You must have got home just a few minutes too late," the sheriff suggested.

"That's what's so terrible," Hendley said with a shudder. "A minute earlier and I'd have been in time. Belle must have heard him stealing the money and tried to stop him."

"Good thing you had your shotgun."

"He would have killed me the same as he killed my wife if I hadn't had it in my hands loaded and ready," Hendley agreed. "Just happened to take it, thinking I might find some ducks on Simmon's pond."

"I don't think there's any need of us bothering you any more, John," the sheriff said kindly. "You're upset enough as 'tis. The coroner'll have to come and look at the bodies before they're moved, but that's just a technicality. It'll go down as self-defense and the grand jury'll vote 'no bill.'"

Hendley nodded. He turned his face away to hide a smirk of satisfaction that would not be downed. He wished they would all get out so he could quit the farce of appearing grief-stricken.

A thin-faced young man came briskly through the door as Sheriff Armstrong and his deputies prepared to leave. He detained the sheriff after one searching glance at Hendley.

"I'd like to stay until the coroner arrives."

"Not satisfied yet, Wallace?" The sheriff surveyed him with a slow smile.

"Just routine," the young man assured him. "There's one or two little matters I want to see cleared up."

"Get your fingerprints and pictures all right?"

THE detective nodded, frowning. "The man's prints coincide with those on the hatchet. Still . . . I'd like to stay and see the thing through."

"Suit yourself," the sheriff shrugged.

"I'd like to have your deputy stay with me. I have no jurisdiction here, you know," Wallace went on.

"I reckon you can stay with Wallace," Armstrong told his deputy. "That is," he went on mildly, turning to Hendley, "if you haven't any objections, John."

Hendley had been listening to the brisk young man with a covert sneer. Let him stay. What did he care if they all stayed? Wasting their time trying to pin something on him.

He said: "No difference to me, Sheriff. I want it to be regular."

Armstrong nodded and patted his shoulder. Hendley moved aside to a window and watched the sheriff's car depart. Curious neighbors were gathering in the back yard, peering in through the kitchen door with awed ejaculations.

The deputy and detective went back into the kitchen. Hendley could hear them moving about and talking in low tones. He obstinately kept his back turned, assuring himself that it didn't in the least matter what they were doing. Not the slightest shadow of suspicion had been directed at him throughout the somewhat perfunctory investigation conducted by the sheriff.

No such thing as a perfect crime, eh? Hendley smiled sardonically in the

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gathering dusk. They had their victim. That was the answer. No unsolved crime to this. He had committed it and then solved it for them. What was the use of looking further for a solution when they had one ready-made?

But why was that young fellow and the deputy snooping around in the kitchen? Despite Hendley's assurance, doubts crept up to assail him. Had he overlooked anything? He knew he hadn't. The city fellow was just a show-off. Wanted to act important in front of the neighbors.

The coroner's car came in the front drive. He watched the coroner get out and go around to the back door. An ambulance had followed the coroner's car. He stood by the window and watched two white-coated young men swing down and carry a stretcher to the rear. It was too dark to distinguish its gruesome burden when they returned to the ambulance.

Hendley turned away from the window impatiently. The low murmur of voices in the kitchen swelled ominously. He stood rigid, sweat pouring from his face. The detective's voice came to him as though from a great distance, brisk and exultant:

"I guessed when the prints on the hatchet were blurred and old. They didn't look right. And look at this. This proves the man was killed first. You'd better get him, Deputy."

They were coming for him. Hendley swung about, stark terror and desperation in his eyes.

He halted in mid-stride toward the window. A trick! They wanted him to hear. Flight would mark him as a murderer. They didn't have any proof. He'd brazen it out.

He turned to face the deputy in the lighted doorway. "Do you . . . want me for anything?"

"Just a formality," the deputy told him grimly. Hendley shuddered as handcuffs clicked on his wrists. He let himself be led toward the kitchen door.

Both bodies had been removed. The pine floor was still spattered with Belle Hendley's blood. Untouched by the crimson stain was the perfect outline of Otto's body where it had lain.

Hendley sagged against the door and stared stupidly as Wallace demanded: "Can you explain why there isn't a spot of blood beneath Otto's body if he killed your wife first and was then shot down by you?"

The deputy grunted: "Guess I was mistaken. The State'll have a hangin' bill after all."

A PICTURE IN INFRA-RED

TO paraphrase a popular proverb, "The mills of science grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly small." When the police combine science with sleuthing, things begin to happen.

In England, an office had been broken into and the only clue of the burglar was a red card upon which he had stepped during the commission of the crime. By means of infra-red photography, it was discovered that nails in the burglar's shoe had made imprints on the card. These markings were very faint and slight, but a specially made photograph showed them to be of a pattern which could be identified and used as corroborative evidence.

The mills of science ground out this tiny clue. The sleuthing department tracked the criminal down.

—*John Berry.*

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"Let's talk real money!"

D F W FACT SPECIAL ARTICLE

And the Green Grass Grew All 'Round

By Will McMorrow

A Fortune Was Crammed into That Old Carpetbag, and Like Its Owner, the Money Was Good — and Green!

A HARD-FEATURED, scheming fellow was this Lem Gibson of Pilligrew Junction — a chin-whiskered, leather-necked general store keeper who would short-weight widow or orphan out of a tenth of a pound of sugar and think he was right smart in doing it.

"Them as got the brains gits the money," was Lem's philosophy, "an' keep your eye skinned an' yer mouth shet. Profits is profits, let no one tell you different."

He was in for a swell profit right then and he wasn't spreading the good news either. He boarded the train at the station, parked his carpetbag at his

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feet—he knew all about them slickers that snatched bags—and unfolded the letter to read it again, holding it so no passer-by could glimpse the contents.

Oct. 11th, 1886.

Dear Friend:

A mutual friend—his name must not figure—confided your name to me. I understand you are a man of shrewd common sense enough to realize good fortune when you get a chance.

I will be plain with you. I trust you. I am dealing in paper goods, ones and tens; do you understand? I cannot be plainer just now. I ask no money. Send nothing. I want to give you plain proofs of my intentions and there is a fortune waiting for you if you are the enterprising man your friend says you are.

I enclose a sample that you can test and a newspaper clipping. No more now. If interested and wideawake send the enclosed envelope to the box-number. If not interested keep this confidential. One good turn deserves another. WELL WISHER.

Lem's close-set eyes perused the clipping for the tenth time. It was obviously cut from a metropolitan newspaper:

OVER ISSUE IN TREASURY
LOST PLATES BELIEVED RESPONSIBLE
OFFICIALS WORRIED

Washington, D. C.—Oct. 1.—Appearance in New York City of one-dollar and ten-dollar bills, authentic and genuine and readily accepted everywhere is causing some concern among Treasury officials. The over-issue of these bills is attributed to the one and ten-dollar plates stolen from the Treasury months ago. The matter was kept dark so that the thieves might be misled as to the extraordinary value of the plates.

The stolen plates are connected with the extraordinary disappearance of elderly Roscoe Doolittle, an old and trusted employee. . . .

And, above this newspaper print, a print, a woodcut of Roscoe Doolittle, a benign gentleman with a white beard and a church-warden look about him.

"By Godfrey!" Lem Gibson chewed this over appreciatively. Plates stolen from the Treasury, good, new bills printed from them that nobody could detect, and these city fellers needed distributors all over the country to pass out the money. Plain as a pikestaff that they couldn't swamp one locality alone with so many ten-dollar bills. And the "sample" enclosed had certainly been perfect. A one-dollar bill that Lem had changed at the bank without question. Lem wouldn't have sent anyone a dollar bill so carelesslike, but what was one dollar to these slickers that could turn 'em out on printing presses? "By Godfrey!"

Safe as church. Some folks might call it stealin', but a man had to be sharp to make easy money an' the government hadn't ought to be so careless with Treasury plates. Serve 'em durned well right.

Lem got off at Grand Central Station, keeping a sharp eye open for detectives that "Well Wisher" had warned him of in the second letter. Pinned in his coat pocket was three hundred dollars in currency. That would buy five thousand dollars in negotiable one and ten-dollar bills made from the stolen plates. He looked around for the man with the red carnation that instructions called for, caught sight of a squint-eyed gentleman that answered the description and sidled up to him.

"Good fortune," Lem muttered the password.

"Good fortune," Red Carnation spoke out of the corner of his mouth. "Detectives here—follow me—don't try to talk."

Lem obeyed, nervous but determined to get hold of that easy money, followed the man around corners, up back alleys to a door, slid in quickly after his guide. Two men were in the small room. A sharp-featured young man in

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a stovepipe hat sat at a hinged-top desk placed against the wall; a patriarchal gentleman—plainly the Roscoe Doolittle whose picture appeared in the clipping—sat like a wooden image in the corner. Red Carnation and Sharpface went into a huddle and Lem had to satisfy them he was not a government spy. It appeared Federal agents were hot after those plates. The Treasury was worried.

OTHER difficulties arose. Was Lem to be trusted not to flood the local market? Could he be be trusted not to talk? Reassured on this point old Mr. Doolittle became balky. It seemed that Sharpface was his son, a guileful youth who was taking his father for a gallop about those plates. The simple, naïve old fellow, Mr. Doolittle, had no idea what the plates were to be used for when he borrowed them from the Treasury. He was afraid there might be something dishonest going on and he wanted his plates back. A confused and doddering old party who appeared to be a dope of the first water. But in his own silly way he promised to be a nuisance.

Young Doolittle winked at Lem. "Father is funny. He thinks we're printing money. You know it ain't so, Mr. Gibson."

Lem grinned knowingly. "Course not." But it was alarming just the same. The five thousand dollars easy money was slipping from his grasp. He added his explanations to the persuasions of the others. He had come on other business. Prompted by young Doolittle, he went into details. It was the lease of this very store. The venerable Doolittle was finally convinced. But nothing would do but he must see it in writing. So his son drew up a lease and Lem signed it with his tongue in his cheek and the old man tottered out.

"Only three hundred dollars," young Doolittle laughed, "an' I guess you can afford to pay that out of the five thousand dollars you get. Likely he'll forget all about it. Now let's get down to business. Got your bag?"

Lem produced the carpetbag and the other swung open his desk and disclosed a tempting heap of new bills. Lem handled a crisp bundle. Perfect as any genuine bill he had ever seen. But he was there to drive a bargain.

"Ain't so good," he demurred. "Don't look right to me."

"Here. Pick out a ten—any ten you want," Doolittle offered. "Got it? Come ahead."

He led the way across the street and pointed to a corner bank.

"Try it yourself."

The teller paid Lem ten one-dollar bills in change without question. Lem's eyes sparkled. How long had this been going on?

Back in the office Lem unstrapped his wad and paid over the three hundred dollars. After that he counted the five thousand dollars himself into the bag. Once he tossed aside a ten-dollar bill that was slightly crumpled. It looked good enough but he could show these fellows that he was as smart as they were. Doolittle looked at the bill.

"Don't like it, hey? All right. I can turn out plenty better."

He touched a match to it and threw it on the floor. It seemed like gross sacrilege to Lem.

"Now that small stuff is done, let's talk real money," Doolittle shoved the carpetbag from him and opened the hinged top of the desk again, pushed aside the heap of currency disclosing bonds of varying denominations. "How

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about some of these? Could you use—"

Lem shook his head. Tryin' to outsmart him, hey? Mebbe he wasn't as green as he looked. Them bonds wouldn't fool nobody.

Obviously baffled, Doolittle slammed down the desk-lid. Lem picked up his carpetbag.

"We can send that," the other ventured. "You're liable to be trailed."

Lem chuckled. "I'll take my chances. Ain't goin to be nobody but me hold this bag, young feller."

He was ushered out, cautiously, with much peeping around corners by Red Carnation, much whispered warning. Apparently, the government was going to great lengths to find those plates. Every second man, according to Lem's escort, was an operative. Lem scurried aboard a train, received parting instructions about keeping the bag out of sight and his guide left.

An hour later, well on his way toward home and fortune, Lem opened the bag furtively to take a peep at his easy money. The bag was not empty. It contained a well-thumbed copy of the city directory and a wad of newspaper. Lem blinked, swallowed his prominent Adam's apple. Three hundred dollars. By Godfrey—or, maybe it was something else he said that shocked the spinster across the aisle. We draw the curtain on Lem.

WITH slight variations to suit the victims, the above is a typical example of the "green goods" game, that hoary grandfather of rackets that flourished and bore bitter fruit that ran into millions of dollars in the amiable '80's and gay '90's of our grandfathers. In its day the "green goods" or "sawdust" racket was the most common and most profitable of swindles. It operated on the theory—never really exploded down to our own day—that there is one born every ten seconds, with the corollary that the worse the sucker the more inclined he is to think he can do a little cheating of his own and get away with it. There was a Lem Gibson in every town and village just aching for a crack at easy money, and there were literally thousands of "sawdust" men waiting for a crack at Lem. The law of supply and demand.

Presumably, our hero took his loss and kept his own counsel. To squawk would be to reveal himself not only as a minor-league sap but a potential crook as well who got what he deserved at the hands of the smart boys. If he were persistent and followed up his loss and located the "sawdust" mob—which he would have difficulty in doing—there was his signed lease at three hundred dollars for a cubicle worth twenty-five dollars.

Usually the "green goods" man did not bother with proof of that sort. He relied on the reluctance of his victims to implicate themselves. The "turning joints" as they were called were used in turn by various mobs that kept on the move. Where possible, they put the more corrupt of the police on the payroll, splitting the "take" when there was a squawk and let the cops frighten off the victim with threats of State's prison or exposure to his friends and neighbors.

Methods of fleecing the sheep in wolf's clothing were many, but they all depended on one thing—building up in the victim the belief that he was being let in on something good. Let us see how it worked in Lem's case.

The come-on letter was written by the "writer"—today we would call him the ballyhoo man. He got his sucker list usually from lists of lottery sub-

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scribers, chance-takers generally. The offering of counterfeit money was broadcast through the mails with a box-office or hotel address so that the prospect could be investigated safely. The story of the stolen plates was, of course, completely false, the alleged newspaper clipping with its picture of one of the mob being printed especially for the trade. The gullible citizen was instructed to meet the gent with the red carnation in New York. He was the "steerer." The old-gentleman was a stage-prop, the so-called son was the "turner" who acted as salesman for the "green goods." Then there was a "bank-roll" man who furnished the genuine money that had been exhibited to Lem.

No counterfeit money had been printed from stolen plates. There were no plates.

When the "turner" packed Lem's bag with real money the lid of the desk had been raised to display the phony bonds. For that moment the bag was hidden by the raised lid and the quick switch made. Behind a panel in the wall was the "ringer" who substituted rubbish for the bills. After that it became important to keep the victim from opening the bag until he was aboard his train. Therefore, the "steerer's" whispered warnings of G-men on the watch.

It would not seem the sort of swindle that could be worked time and again. Evidently, it seldom occurred to the avaricious dupe that, with the ability to turn out perfectly passable money at will, the "sawdust" man should not have had to advertise it at ten cents on the dollar—and take other bills in return.

But it went on nevertheless despite police exposures and warnings. By 1890 it had grown to a major industry on the shady side of the street. "Turning joints" sprang up, like latter-day clip-joints, in every important city. Bales of circulars, ten to fifteen thousand a day, went through the mails extolling the firm's particular brand of "goods," warning the customers of inferior quality stuff being put out by competitors. So numerous were "turning joints" in New York City that the boys got together and divided the town into districts so there would be no doubling up and newcomers attracted by the profit-sheets were warned there was no room for them. Evidence adduced during the investigation of the Lexow committee in 1895 showed that not only police but telegraph operators and post-office employees were in the pay of the "sawdust" distributors and that, if an outsider attempted to muscle into another's territory, there would be trouble ahead for him. To our modern ears it all has a sadly familiar ring.

BY all accounts the "green goods" game was the leading swindle of the time. The amount of money taken in is difficult to estimate but it must have been enormous to support the number of switch-artists in the style to to which they were accustomed. The safety factor was high. Even without the connivance of crooked officials, detection was difficult. Victims seldom wailed out loud; ordinarily they did not bother the police.

Then there was the gentleman from Tennessee—a lanky party who wandered into a "turning joint" on Broadway and made a deal for eight thousand dollars' worth of "green goods." The deal made, he pocketed a fat package of the show-money.

"You all want I should give you what I brung?"

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Certainly. And would the gentleman like to see some bonds?

The tall man from Tennessee produced what he had "brung"—to wit, an over-size Colt and a bowie knife, and went promptly to work with both. He believed in forthright methods. The innocent, old lad, who didn't know what the plates were stolen for, did not wait to inquire any further but went through the window, whiskers and all, and when the "steerer" emerged from the hospital six months later he was wearing a glass eye almost as good as the one that had been shot out. The "green goods" industry closed up in that neighborhood, and the Tennessee sheriff let the smart city cops figure it out themselves.

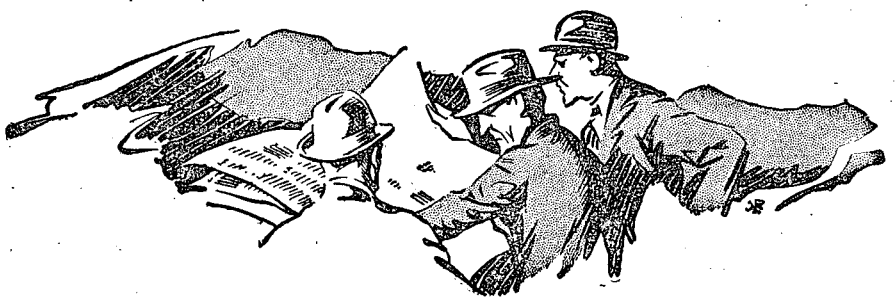
Or the hard-hitting clergyman from up-country who came to town after some of his parishioners had been fleeced. Not only did the militant churchman grab the firm's capital—for charity, presumably—but thoroughly cleaned the place out, furniture and all, splintering most of the furniture, and went his way rejoicing.

Particularly sceptical victims inclined to peep were given "tops and bottoms," bill-size packages of paper with a good bill on top and bottom to simulate a packet of currency. It is on record that one victim was cheated four times. He paid his money and the "goods" were supposedly lost in the mails; then they were lost sent by express—in either case he could hardly make a claim—then he took the bag himself and was persuaded to check it at the station and lost it again. The fourth time he was actually given the bag of newspaper and allowed to open it himself when he was far enough away. He must have been a trusting soul.

Education of a gullible public in the methods used by swindlers, a few stiff jail sentences, rigid postal laws and the exposures of the Lexow investigation into police corruption, were probably responsible for the decline and eventual disappearance of the "green goods" racket. Even the lunatic fringe began to realize that no crook ever intends to give the sucker a break. Particularly, if the sucker is sap enough to throw in with the crook in violation of the law.

"Green goods," as a paying business, has gone to join the gold-brick racket and other ancient frauds. Perhaps we are wiser today and too sophisticated to fall for other sucker-games that organized crookdom foists on the public from time to time.

Perhaps we can smile when we think how the underworld fleeced our forbears. Perhaps.



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Maury Regan, Stock Operator, Started a Panic of His Own in Trying to Corner the Market—and a Very Shrewd Murderer!

Maury saw the Exchange policeman stoop

SPECIAL SHORT

D F W

Murder on the 'Change

By James Perley Hughes

THE thickening crowd on the floor of the Stock Exchange tensed as the hands of the clock neared ten. The sensation of zero hour filled the vast room, but at Post Fifteen it was taut to the breaking point. This would be the focal point of a battle that would be either lost or won before the clangor of the gong ended the day's trading.

As the minute hand neared the hour, Mortimer Garland, the white headed president of the Exchange, appeared upon the rostrum immediately below the clock. A hush quelled the murmur on the floor as he raised his hand.

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"I regret to inform you, gentlemen," the man's smooth, suave voice was barely raised above conversational pitch, "but reports have reached the board of governors that 'wash sales' have been made at one of our more active trading posts. I need only remind you that the penalty for offenses of this kind is loss of membership. That is all, gentlemen. Thank you."

A thousand voices swelled as Mortimer Garland disappeared through the door at the back of the rostrum. At Post Fifteen, Maury Regan glanced at Guy Blanton, his chief adversary in the battle that had been going on for the control of Radio-Television. Each was the principal broker for one of the leading industrialists seeking to capture that corporate prize. Regan's eyes were hard as they met Blanton's.

"He couldn't have been referring to your crowd, could he?" he asked belligerently.

Blanton grinned and shook his head. Dapper and soft voiced, he screened the steel in his make-up by foppish dress and oily ways. He looked anything but a fighting man, but those who had broken lances with him knew he fought to the death and asked no quarter.

"Washing's not my specialty," the man's grin widened, "I'd be more liable to go in for a little simple burglary."

Regan's blue gaze lighted. "Perhaps you've tried—already. My desk at home was broken into last night. How 'bout it?"

"Hunt for finger prints. Maybe you can get something on me," the broker jeered.

Regan flushed and for a moment hot rage showed in his eyes. Then he smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"I did have the prints photographed," he said, "so you'd better—"

Clangor of the opening bell drowned his remaining words. Voices swelled to a roar before the gong's brazen note was silenced. The market opened with a rush and the crowd about Post Fifteen began shouting and milling in that disorderly precision that baffled the onlookers in the visitors' gallery, who hear only turmoil and see only strife.

"Thousand R-T—at ninety—and a half," a voice boomed immediately behind Maury Regan.

The broker spun as if a cannon had been discharged. The price was fully four points off yesterday's close and a block of that size would materially advance the campaign of his principal, George K. Thompson.

Thompson was battling with Ernest Carmody for the control of Radio-Television. Guy Blanton was Carmody's leading broker.

"A thousand R-T—at ninety and a—" the voice repeated.

"Sold!" Regan snapped, holding up his hand.

"Sorry," Guy Blanton laughed, "but I've booked it."

The man made a note and nodded to the other broker. Transactions on the floor are always by word of mouth. A nod, a signal, a gesture is enough to consummate a transaction that nears millions. Maury Regan glanced at the elliptical button on the coat of the selling broker. "Jos. W. Wilson—Carlson, Morrow & Weeks" was its legend, together with the man's Exchange number. Regan made a note of the name and number. He would trace that transaction. Wilson's firm had been operating with Blanton in a rather strange manner and President Garland had just issued a warning about "wash sales."

"What's that — thousand R-T at

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ninety and a half?" a gray uniformed quotation reporter inquired.

THE man's eyes were on Maury Regan, unfriendly eyes with more than a touch of mockery in their depths. The broker knew Clyde McBride and thoroughly disliked him. Less than a month before, Regan had been forced to report him to the board of governors. The reporter had faced discharge, but Regan had asked that he be given another trial. Now the man hated him, more for his charity than anything else.

"That's what they said—a thousand at ninety and a half," Maury snapped.

McBride turned away, but as he did, he flashed a signal to someone that brought a puzzled frown to Regan's face. But the swirl of the market made him forget the reporter. A maelstrom was boiling around Post Fifteen.

The Radio-Tel crowd was swelled by a swarm of "Two-Dollar Brokers." These aids to the hard-pressed commission men speeded the action around the post. A battle of the Titans was mounting with savage speed that made the remainder of the floor seem sluggish.

"A hundred at ninety-three—who wants a hundred R-T at ninety-three?" a voice droned.

"Sold." Maury Regan held up three fingers.

The broker nodded and they both made notes. The sale came from Wiggins & Small, an outside house. A minute or so later the transaction appeared on the transluxes in the four corners of the floor. Guy Blanton's smile widened and he shouted to a broker on the other side of the post.

"Thousand at ninety? Okay."

Maury Regan frowned. He had just bought a block of the same size but at three dollars more per share. Either Blanton was making a fool of him or something strange was going on. He felt a touch on his arm and a page nodded to his number appearing on the black annunciator on the north wall. He hurried to his private telephone.

"Regan speaking," he said into the instrument.

"Listen here, young fellow—what's going on down there?" It was the voice of George K. Thompson speaking, "Either the ticker is crazy—or are you? My orders were to buy at the market."

"That's what I'm doing."

"Then Ernest Carmody must be working with specialists who are better than you. I've seen their transactions and—"

"Wash sales, if I ever saw one," the broker shot back.

"Never mind the alibi—get busy."

Maury Regan replaced the receiver. He was boiling inwardly. Someone had been talking to Thompson and causing trouble. As he turned from the telephone, Guy Blanton left his own wire and hurried to him. The man had laid aside his suavity and his face was dark with anger.

"What's that about 'washes'?" he demanded.

"You tell me."

"I'll tell you this," he growled, "any more cracks and they'll be looking for my finger prints on something beside a desk."

It was Regan's turn to grin.

"Figuring on a murder?" he gibed. "If I were you I'd—"

He paused as he noticed the translux in the corner moving at feverish speed. Almost every other transaction was in R-T. His jaw sagged as he noticed the last quotation. Within the last few

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minutes, the price had advanced several dollars. It would soon cross a hundred.

REGAN hurried back to Post Fifteen to find the crowd was thicker than ever. Not only had more of the "Two-Dollar Brokers" appeared, but a cloud of speculators, who traded on their own account, and were there to snatch quick profits. Among them he recognized Hal Evans, once Guy Blanton's partner, but now his bitterest enemy. Evans grinned as Regan neared him.

"Going to make my old pal pay back some of the money he stole from me," he whispered in throaty tone. "Then he won't have so much money to spend on that blonde."

He raised his eyes to the visitors' gallery.

Regard followed his gaze. He had seen the woman frequently of late. He wondered who she was. Then he saw Clyde McBride coming toward him. The man's face was darkly dangerous, but a new flurry at the Post made Regan focus his attention on the battle that was raging more bitterly than before. Evans' coming had speeded the pace and added to Blanton's cold fury. The man knew his former partner was selling short and he met the onslaught unflinchingly. Brokers surrounded the two. For the moment the battle of the Titans was forgotten in this face-to-face conflict between former parners.

"If you can't deliver, it's going to be just too bad," Blanton warned, when the translux showed the stock had passed a hundred.

"Trading on your own, aren't you?" Evans jeered.

"As far as you're concerned, I am."

Maury Regan was quick to realize that this clash was his big opportunity. With Blanton and Evans at each other's throat, he would buy real shares and put George K. Thompson in control of Radio-Tel. He picked up blocks here and there, booking them as rapidly as they were offered. Noon came and the stock was nearing a hundred and twenty. The crowd around the post had become a roaring, screaming mob. Guy Blanton was purple of face, his gardenia awry, his collar unbuttoned.

"You dirty crook," he growled at Regan. "You got Evans to come here, didn't you?"

"No, but—he helped some."

"I'll have his hide by the time the bell rings."

"Perhaps—meantime, I'm going to have Radio-Tel—all wrapped up and tied with a ribbon."

"Look out you're not wrapped up in a wooden dressing robe," the broker threatened. "And while you're at it—"

A fresh roar broke in upon his words. Blocks of R-T were coming in from the back country. Speculators were realizing quick profits and prices broke sharply. For a moment it looked as if Radio had gone into a tail spin.

"Hope you'll be able to accept delivery," Hal Evans called to Blanton as he booked block after block of stock.

"You'll be lucky to—"

Regan did not hear the rest of that bitter exchange. He was too busy buying from all and sundry. The hands of the clock above the rostrum were well past two. Less than an hour more of battle. A glance at the contents of his memorandum book. If all the brokers from whom he had bought were able to deliver, George K. Thompson was assured control of Radio-Tel. But he could not leave this to chance. Not with the wild market that was rag-

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ing around Post Fifteen. The stock was reacting, climbing swiftly as the closing hour neared.

"Buy two hundred—one-twenty and a quarter."

Regan looked around. Hal Evans was fighting desperately to cover his short sales. He had less than twenty-four hours in which to deliver and Guy Blanton had booked every offer he had made.

"At a hundred and twenty-one," he shouted.

Blanton laughed aloud. He had his former partner in a vise and would soon begin to turn the screw. The two men were fighting a personal duel now. Nothing mattered but their mutual hate.

"This is a break for me," Maury Regan told himself.

II

ONCE more he totalled the shares he had bought and checked them against the firms through which they would be delivered. All were thoroughly respectable houses. He picked up a few lots and then went to the post to get the total of Radio-Tel sales. The figures astounded him. There were not enough shares outstanding to cover the shorts. One of two things had happened. Either Carmody was giving up and cashing in on profits or the bears had been trapped and would be squeezed without mercy.

Another glance at the clock. Guy Blanton was smiling broadly. At first Regan thought he was enjoying Hal Evans' frantic efforts to cover, but he saw the broker's eyes were fixed on the visitors' gallery that stretched along the east side of the room. The pretty blond woman Evans had pointed out earlier in the day was staring over the railing looking down at Post Fifteen. She waved her hand and pointed to the clock. Blanton nodded his understanding and held up his index finger, half-doubled. They would meet on the half hour. A rendezvous had been made.

"Buy a thousand—at one twenty-five," Hal Evans bellowed.

Guy Blanton bellowed with mirth.

"Try to get it," he called to his former partner, "and while you're doing it—remember you're buying a mink coat for a lady friend of mine."

"I'll see you in—"

"What was that last sale, sir," Clyde McBride had stepped to Guy Blanton's side. His face was gray, his eyes bloodshot. The frenzy of the day had drained him.

"Ask him," Blanton gestured to Evans and laughed again, "ask him if he's going to buy a mink coat—"

He paused as McBride whispered something in his ear. A wave of color crossed his cheek.

"Get out of here—get out of here you—"

"Hundred and thirty," Evans boomed.

The hands of the clock were nearing three. Only minutes stood between him and ruin. He rushed to where Blanton was standing, a wide grin on his face.

"What'll you take to settle?" he demanded.

"The market," the broker replied, laughing insolently.

But his laughter died when he saw the blond woman signalling to him from the visitors' gallery.

Maury Regan saw the pantomime, but could not understand it. He was standing just back of Blanton and missed not a movement. Evans was on one side, McBride on the other, copying the final transactions.

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"What'll you take?" Evans demanded in white rage.

"Your hide," his former partner answered, "and I'm going to tan it and—"

The clangor of the closing bell broke through the typhoon of sound around Post Fifteen. Atop it was another noise, a sharp explosive crack, but in the tempest about the post it passed without attention.

The shouting of the brokers died gradually. Then their voices were raised again. Maury Regan looked up from his notes and stared incredulously at the scene before him.

UNIFORMED police attached to the Exchange shouldered their way through the ring of petrified brokers. The gaze of all was fixed on Guy Blanton. The man had sunk to his knees and was clawing at his back. He twisted around, apparently looking at Regan.

"So you got me—in the back—just like—" his tongue thickened and his words were no longer articulate.

"Me? What do you—"

"I wasn't talking—"

Regan looked right, then left. Hal Evans was staring at his stricken ex-partner, a hard light in his cold, gray eyes. Clyde McBride, the quotation reporter, stooped as if to lift the man to his feet.

Next Maury glanced at the floor. He felt rooted to the spot, unable to move. He saw one of the Exchange police stoop and pick up something. It was an automatic pistol. Guy Blanton had been killed as the gong rang, the explosion passing almost unnoticed in the clangor of the final minute of the market.

Regan stared at the weapon. Then his breath stopped for an instant. He had a weapon, just like that, at home. He disliked Guy Blanton, at times he hated him. There, but for God's grace, was his gun and the man he had fought times without number.

"I'll help you, Mr. Blanton—just let me—" Clyde McBride was trying to raise the injured broker.

But a red foam came to Blanton's mouth and he pitched forward, falling face downward on the floor. His body remained motionless.

Maury Regan turned to stare into Hal Evans' hard, deeply lined face. The man's eyes were fixed on his. They were sharp with accusation.

More Exchange police appeared. They worked with that quiet precision for which the attaches of the organization are famous. Guy Blanton's lifeless body was borne away and the papers that littered the floor were spread so that the small pool of blood that had come from his body was entirely obscured. Men muttered to themselves and to each other. Then came the check-up of the day's sales, bid and asked prices, the daily clean-up of the world's greatest mart.

Maury Regan felt a thrill of pleasure as his notes told he had captured control of Radio-Tel for George K. Thompson. The final reports of the "Two-Dollar Brokers" made his triumph more than sure. He pictured the celebration that must be going on in Thompson's office. With the purchase of each block of stock, he had flashed the information to his partners. A warm feeling of triumph went through him and he was smiling when a page touched his elbow and pointed to his number on the south wall annunciator.

"Good work, my boy—drop into my office after you're through," Thompson's voice trumpeted over the

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wire when he had answered the call.

"Thanks—I'll be glad to, but—I'm afraid I took on more R-T than you really need. I wanted to make sure you—"

"Never mind the alibi—it's all wheat in the mill—good property. In fact, I'm saving a little block of it for you—just as a souvenir!"

"Thanks, Mr. Thomp—"

"And what's this teletype story about Guy Blanton being hurt on the floor—hope you didn't have anything to do with that."

"None of my work," Regan assured him, "but it was worse than an injury—it looks like murder—from here."

"Murder on the 'Change!" the crime struck Thompson as funny rather than tragic, "I've heard of some folks being skinned alive down there, but not killed. According to the 'type,' Hal Evans left his pelt hanging on Post Fifteen. How 'bout it?"

"I guess he did — over-extended himself, but—"

REGAN felt a touch upon his arm. He looked around to see one of the Stock Exchange detectives standing beside him. With him were two uniformed special policemen, their Sam Browne belts supporting decidedly visible revolvers.

"I'll tell you about it in the office," Maury said into the telephone, "somebody's trying to talk to me—about the murder."

He turned to the detective after hanging up the phone.

"Want me to make a statement?" he asked.

"Yes—that's it—tell everything you saw."

Something in the man's voice narrowed Regan's eyes. Then he saw Hal Evans and Clyde McBride standing back of the police. Their eyes were hard and accusing.

"This way, Mr. Regan," one of the police said.

The detective led the way to the ornate room used for meetings of the board of governors. There a semicircle of leather covered chairs faced a dais upon which was a decidedly judicial bench. Behind it stood Mortimer Garland, president of the Exchange. Regan knew what was going to happen. The Exchange never washed its linen in public. It worked with noiseless precision until it had completed its inquiry and then surrendered its prisoner to constituted authority together with sufficient evidence.

Seated on Garland's right was a burly man, whose thick shoulders and barrel chest gave more than a hint of Centre Street. Regan recognized him as Chief Inspector O'Brien, shrewd, kindly, yet a bulldog in handling any case. But his presence that afternoon was purely advisory. A telephone message had brought him to Wall Street. Garland would make the investigation guided by O'Brien and one of the Exchange's legal staff.

The inquiry opened as soon as Regan, McBride and Evans took chairs in the center of the semicircle. The first few witnesses told their stories and were excused. They had seen nothing but a dying man, who spoke words they could not hear amid the clangor of the closing hour.

Hal Evans was the first called of Regan's group. The broker attempted no evasions. He struck from the shoulder.

"Sure I had words with Blanton," he readily admitted, "and with plenty of reason. He took me for every cent I have in this world—and then some; but I didn't kill him. I might have, if

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I had had the chance, but nothing like that happened."

"Ever threaten him?" Mortimer Garland asked.

"Certainly I did. We weren't exactly friends, you know. But I'm not the only one. Maury Regan did—so did McBride, the reporter, for that matter. I don't pretend I'm sorry Guy Blanton's dead. Not after what he did to me. He deserved killing on more than one count. He was a dog, but I didn't kill him."

Chief Inspector O'Brien leaned forward to whisper to Mortimer Garland. The Exchange chief nodded and Evans was waved aside for the moment and Clyde McBride was summoned. The quotation reporter flushed slightly when Garland leaned over the bench to look into his face. His back stiffened and he assumed an almost soldier-like pose. Regan listened to his statement with lazy indifference. Then he took out his memorandum book and rechecked his operations for the day. It had been a real battle, but George K. Thompson had been assured control of Radio-Tel even before detath struck Blanton down: The man had been too busy trying to squeeze Hal Evans to put up an effective fight.

Maury wondered how large a block of stock Thompson had set aside for him. It would be worth a lot as soon as the news of the corner became known. Skyrocketing prices would mark the shorts' desperate attempts to cover.

"I was standing on his left. Mr. Evans was on his right," McBride's droning voice reached Regan dimly.

The broker nodded to himself. The man's story was correct.

"—I saw Mr. Regan behind him," the reporter went on, "—the bell had begun. Everybody was shouting—"

Once more Maury bobbed his head, but his mind was doing sums in mental arithmetic as he computed his commissions. Altogether, it was the banner day in Regan's life.

"—then I heard something like a book slamming," McBride went on. "—Mr. Blanton kind of shuddered. Then his knees began to bend. I tried to grab him, but I had a lot of papers in one hand and my pen in the other."

MAURY REGAN smiled to himself. The day's profits were just what he and Kathy Bannister needed. Now they could marry and have an apartment worthy of Kathy and his own position in the Street. His smile widened as he visioned the expression on the girl's face that night when he would tell her the good news.

"—I saw something fall from Mr. Regan's hand and hit the floor," the reporter continued in even voice. "It fell among the papers—I saw it gleam —like a knife."

Maury Regan sat up with a jerk at the sound of his name. McBride had seen something fall from his hand? Nothing had fallen. The man was mistaken—or crazy. The broker leaned forward. He felt the eyes of the men seated in the semicircle focused upon him. The gray-blue gaze of Chief Inspector O'Brien bored searchingly. Mortimer Garland was staring at him.

"What's that he said?" Regan whispered to the Exchange detective seated beside him.

"Plenty," the man growled.

"Can you tell me what fell from Mr. Regan's hand?" Garland pressed. Then as an afterthought: "You mean, of course, Mr. Maury Regan of Lewis, Regan & Stout. That gentleman there."

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The president's hand indicated the astonished broker. Clyde McBride glanced around. "Yes—that's him."

"And what was it that fell from his hand?"

"It looked like metal—it struck with a thump."

"Did it look like this?" Garland held up an automatic pistol.

"Yes—something."

Regan stared incredulously at the man whose story was charging him with murder.

"Something?" Garland demanded, after a whispered consultation with Chief Inspector O'Brien. "Was this it—or something else?"

Once more the automatic pistol that had slain Guy Blanton was held up for inspection.

"Yes, sir—I guess that's it."

"Was it—or was it not?" pinning him down.

"Yes, sir, it was."

McBride's voice was low but distinctly audible in the taut silence.

Regan stared with unbelieving eyes. That soft voiced man was swearing his life away, swearing falsely. He had saved the man's job, but McBride had hated him, yet even so, he could not comprehend a hatred that would go to this length. He half arose, his face dark with anger.

"Sit down—you'll get your chance," the detective growled.

The man's professional suavity was gone. Regan was no longer a member of the Exchange in his eyes, but a murderer against whom a perfect case was being assembled.

A buzz ran down the semicircle as McBride was waved back to his chair and Garland beckoned to Regan.

"You heard what McBride had to say, didn't you?" the president's voice was suavely courteous.

"Yes—but it isn't so."

Regan forced his voice to hold the same level as Garland's. Rage seethed through him, but high anger was dangerous when he needed every ounce of self control to meet this emergncy.

III

HIS mind was going at top speed. Clyde McBride must have some powerful reason for this charge, some motivation so irresistible that it forced him to swear another's life away. The reporter hated him, but that was not sufficient. He, in turn, disliked McBride, but he had no desire to do him harm. The man must have some driving goad forcing him to take this stand. Only one was possible, Regan kept telling himself, as he awaited Garland's next question. It came as an added surprise.

"Did you ever see this before?" The man held up the pistol with which Guy Blanton had been killed.

Regan noticed he picked it up with a spotless handkerchief he had taken from his breast pocket.

Maury took the weapon, handling it gingerly. Suddenly he felt his heart stand still and then race wildly. The front sight had been filed down to half its original size. He remembered cutting it down at the suggestion of his guide in the Maine woods last winter. The weapon was his own.

"I asked—have you ever seen that pistol before, Mr. Regan?"

Mortimer Garland's voice was still level, but had lost its suavity. It had a clicking quality, like a steel trap whose jaws have come together capturing a prisoner.

Maury Regan looked up, meeting his chief's eyes.

"Unless I'm mistaken," he said, "this gun is mine."

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Mortimer Garland dropped back into his chair and turned to Chief Inspector O'Brien.

"I guess that's all you need, isn't it?" he asked.

"Looks pretty good, but still—"

He paused as Regan stepped closer to the bench-like rostrum. The broker addressed his words to O'Brien, rather than President Garland.

Recognition of the pistol had crystalized Regan's thoughts. At first, it was a stunning blow. Now it cleared what had been an impenetrable fog. Only the motive behind the act was dim, but he sensed the reason. He must uncover it immediately by a swift and incisive attack.

"If you'll call Centre Street, Mr. Inspector," Regan said in scarcely audible tones, "you'll find that your burglary squad has a photograph of a set of finger prints taken from my desk—at home."

The detective chief nodded and reached for a telephone.

"And, Mr. Garland," Regan raced on, "I think you'll find a particularly attractive blond woman waiting outside the entrance to the visitors' gallery."

The president of the Exchange frowned in puzzled surprise.

"What has she to do with—"

"I'd like to have her here," the broker broke in, "as well as the detective who called at my home."

Chief Inspector O'Brien nodded his understanding and began speaking into the telephone, holding his voice to a level that could not be heard three feet away. With his conversation ended, he turned to whisper to Mortimer Garland.

The Exchange chief nodded and beckoned Hal Evans to the bench.

"Mr. McBride said he saw something fall—this gun in fact—did you see it?" he inquired.

"Yes—I did."

MAURY REGAN tensed as he awaited the next question. He turned and threw it at the witness before Garland could speak. "From my hand?" he demanded.

Evans hesitated. He glanced at McBride, whose protruding, almost goatish eyes were fixed on his.

"I don't know—it all happened so suddenly," he stammered.

"It's rather important—to me," Regan pointed out.

The speculator's brows knotted. Then he slowly shook his head.

"Damned if I know," he blurted. "Sorry, but—"

He paused as Mortimer Garland addressed him.

"I understand your hesitation, Mr. Evans, but as Mr. Regan points out—it is important."

"Yes, I know, but—"

A door leading into the governors' room opened and a woman entered escorted by two uniformed police. Her face was pale in spite of her rouge and she cast a frightened look at Mortimer Garland. Clyde McBride started to arise, but suddenly sat down again.

"Wait until the boss has finished," the detective seated between him and Regan whispered.

More questions were put to Hal Evans, but his statement was unchanged. He had seen the pistol fall, but from whose hand he could not swear. Maury Regan's face was drained of blood. He had not killed Guy Blanton, but someone had. He must reveal the murderer and show his reasons for the crime. The presence of his own weapon and Clyde McBride's testimony were enough to send him to the chair.

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He must plunge and plunge madly. The men of the Exchange were used to gambles that gave swift poverty or sudden wealth. He was dicing with life and reputation and must not shrink. He was like a bull speculator who had thrown his fortune into a market while the bears sold short without cessation. Desperate he was, but not hopeless. Now for the counter-attack.

Once more the door opened and uniformed attendants ushered in two men, one of whom Regan recognized as the Centre Street detective who had visited his home. The man carried a small bag and hurried to where Chief Inspector O'Brien was seated.

Regan watched him narrowly. Everything depended upon what he did and said within the next few minutes. A pause while the men on the bench consulted. Then Garland beckoned Regan.

"What did you want of this gentleman?" he inquired.

"He's a finger-print expert. I want him to take those on my gun. Then compare them with the prints of all of us who were near Blanton when he was killed."

"Good idea," rumbled Chief Inspector O'Brien.

The Centre Street expert was swift but sure in his routine. Less than five minutes were required for the task. Then he made speedy comparisons of the prints. Mortimer Garland frowned when the report was made to him.

"He says only your prints appear upon the weapon," the Exchange leader announced.

REGAN'S lips tightened. Now he knew he was right, although the report apparently clinched the case against him. Of course the murderer had held a handkerchief in his hand when he fired and it was only natural that some of Maury's own prints remained. Still—the gun was evidence. It still might point out the killer. Regan kept the weapon unloaded in his home. Its magazine had been filled since he last saw it. Cartridges were hard to handle with gloves or handkerchief.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Regan," Garland began, when the broker stood silent, "but I believe no good purpose can be served by—"

"Just a minute, sir—I have an idea. Have him look for prints on the magazine inside the butt—also the cartridges."

"All right, but—"

"If you don't find something—something convincing—I'll go with these gentlemen," Regan nodded to the men from Centre Street.

The finger-print experts swiftly dusted the pistol's magazine. Their brows bunched as they appraised the result. A pulse of joy shot through Maury Regan as he read their faces. Now for the final plunge.

"Tell them to compare those prints with the ones they found on my desk at home," he said.

A man leaped to his feet, his face lined and livid. He started for the door, but two uniformed Exchange guards grasped his arms.

"What's the matter, McBride?" Mortimer Garland demanded.

"I just wanted—to speak to my wife," the man answered, nodding to the blonde woman on the other side of the room.

Maury Regan glanced from McBride to the woman. Now he understood everything. He approached the bench where the finger-print experts were pointing out the results of their investigation.

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"This is what happened, Mr. Garland," Regan began. "Guy Blanton had been meeting Mrs. McBride outside—they had a date for this afternoon—her husband found it out. He knew Blanton and I had been fighting on the floor and took it as a personal quarrel. He knew of my gun. I think I showed it to him last year just before I went up into Maine to hunt moose. Anyhow, he knew about it, and he entered my apartment and took it. I did not know it was gone—until I recognized it."

"Can you prove what you are saying?" the president of the Exchange demanded in his very suave and placating tone of voice.

"I think so. You have the prints in your hands. That's Mrs. McBride—over there—her husband is here. If he can explain how his prints got on my desk and on the magazine of that gun, I'll be willing to let these detectives take me."

"I guess you won't have to do that," Chief Inspector O'Brien rumbled as he nodded to Clyde McBride. "That's the man we want."

The quotation reporter had fainted.

"Why didn't you tell me this before, Mr. Regan?" Mortimer Garland's habitual suavity had returned.

"I didn't know it myself."

The group around the president's rostrum broke up as the police led Clyde McBride away. The Exchange had followed its usual method and turned over a prisoner to constituted authority together with sufficient evidence to convict him. Now the business of the day could be concluded.

Outside the governors' room, the ticker was pounding out the bid and asked prices, while the teletype, announced that George K. Thompson had obtained control of Radio-Tel after a campaign that would be remembered for years to come.

Maury Regan glanced at his watch and stepped to a telephone. A minute or so later he was telling Kathy Bannister that Havana was a swell town in which to have a honeymoon.

THE "HI, JACK" GANG

IT was near the end of harvest time and the long line of empty box cars and gondolas wound ahead in the darkness like a hungry caterpillar. Hoboes perched inside with a feeling of security obtained from the wages they had made as harvest hands. As the freight slowed down on a long up-grade a number of figures scrambled from behind trees and bushes along the track and trotted along the slowly moving box cars until they spotted one that struck their fancy. Inside they clambered and the beams of their flashlights showed the apprehensive expressions of the faces of the hoboes who were the original occupants of the car. None of the invaders spoke save the one who appeared to be leader. He said only, "Hi, Jack," but that simple expression deepened the terror in the hearts of the hoboes. It signified to them that they were at the mercy of the gang, the "Hi, Jack" gang, which preyed upon such as they. By surrendering all of their harvest wages, they were allowed to continue while the gang dropped out of the car.

Although they did not know it, this gang was adding a new word to the English language, for, as their notoriety spread, the word, "hijack" came to be used to describe similar types of crime.

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Twenty Years of Secrecy and Fear Was Only the First Mortgage on Those Stolen Masterpieces, for the Principal Was Still Due!

"Stay there!" commanded Morny. "Don't move!"

Twenty-Year Payment

By Lawrence Treat

IT was night. At the wall surrounding the vast grounds of Rider's Rest, there came, almost inaudible, the clack of a stone, the light trickling splash of mortar. Momentarily, the dim silhouette of a man showed. Then there was a dull plop, and silence closed in again.

Across the lawn came furtive, muffled steps. A shadow, it seemed, stalking. It had big groping arms which swung loosely, and one hand held a stick or a knife. The starlight was too clouded to reflect even the glint of steel.

A chain rattled and a dog barked twice. The bark turned to a short howl, and a thud interrupted the yelp that was never finished.

The mansion itself was dark, except for the thin half circle of an arch where light squeezed through between a ground floor curtain and window. For a second, something crossed that slender line of light, then merged with obscurity.

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Again the somber mass of the house loomed, black except for the half circle of light. Servants' quarters, guest wing, the big nave of the art gallery—all were dark again, all silent. Nothing had happened, yet everything.

INSIDE, Thomas Morny sat before the fireplace of his big Tudor living room, thumbing an art catalogue. A lamp with a carved jade base smeared yellow on the bony surfaces of his face and reflected from his eyes as if they were a pair of bluish diamonds.

A tall man, tall even when sitting in a chair with his long legs crossed and his long fingers, knotty at the knuckles, pointing to the margins of print. Once he turned quickly at a click near the window, then resumed his reading.

He was alone tonight, with all the servants at a dance in the village. A revolver lay in his lap. He fingered it occasionally. He was nervous.

Maybe he shouldn't have given all the help the same night off. Or maybe he should have asked Inspector Daniels for a patrolman or two to watch the grounds. Everyone knew a half million dollars' worth of pictures and antiques were in the house. And there were another half million worth that nobody knew anything about. Suppose someone were sneaking up on him now. . . .

Morny laughed from the back of his throat, a high cackling falsetto. His nerves weren't right this evening. He shouldn't be here alone. He whirled suddenly and raised his gun. "You!" he snapped. "Hands up!"

The man who had just opened a locked window from the outside froze in his tracks. His dark eyes stared coldly at the gun. This was something he hadn't figured on. "I'd better close the window," he remarked in a deep voice. "Draughty for an old man like you."

"Stay there!" commanded Morny. "Don't move!"

The heavy-set intruder shrugged and raised his hands. There was blood on them.

"What's that?" demanded Morny.

"Your dog, I guess."

"Avon III!" muttered Morny, his eyes ablaze. "He won blue ribbons in the last four shows he entered. He's worth over—"

"He won't win any more ribbons," interrupted the intruder, in his deep, powerfully timbred voice. "And I'm tired of holding my hands up. What is this anyhow—a game?"

"Keep them up!" ordered Morny.

The black-haired man wrinkled his forehead. He was big in the chest and shoulders, and his head was massive. Yet his force was less in his muscles than in his dark, relentless eyes.

"Have it your way," he remarked. "I'm Ellert. Richard Ellert."

"You're a crook—that's all I care about! And I'm going to turn you over to the police."

"Bah!" snorted Ellert. "Think I broke in here to steal something? Your paintings, maybe?"

"You broke in. That's enough."

"Exactly. That's enough."

Something in the way he said it made Morny pause.

"You're an old fool, Morny. A collector gone nuts, worrying over his damned paintings."

"Crazy, am I?" Morny started to cross the room. Despite his age, his carriage held a springiness that came from summers on a golf course and winters in a boat off Florida. "We'll see about that."

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"Going to phone the cops?" inquired Ellert. "Oh, no, you're not. But you'll send them away if they come."

Morny pulled at his bar of gray mustache and stamped over to the phone. He was watching Ellert like a hawk, watching with shiny, quick eyes. One hand was already on the receiver when Ellert spoke.

"LaNoue sent me."

"La—Noue!" Morny's fingers released the phone, and slowly he wilted, lowered his gun.

"LaNoue's a friend of mine. He told me what he'd done." Ellert laughed mirthlessly. "I guess I can close the window now without getting sniped."

He pushed shut the tall French door that he'd forced with a jimmy, walked over to the wing chair and sat down. "You have a nice little house here, Morny. What does it feel like to have a few millions? I want to know, because I'm going to have one of them soon."

II

MORNY was still standing near the phone, the gun still drooping from his nerveless fingers. But his eyes blazed with a fanatic gleam, and the corners of his mouth kept twitching.

"I haven't got millions—or anywhere near that. You made a mistake, Ellert. I've had heavy losses."

Ellert pulled over the jade cigar box that matched the lamp. "Mind if I have one?" He held it to his nostrils and sniffed. "Not bad, Morny. If you can buys cigars at a dollar a throw and run this house all for yourself, you've got enough for me. I'm always satisfied with what I can get. You sell the house and the pictures. Whatever it brings, we split."

"If you mean that," whispered Morny, "I'd shoot both of us!"

"Naah!" Ellert crossed his legs and leaned back at the first puff of the cigar. "That would be acting like a child."

"I don't know your game," said Morny crisply, "but whatever it is, it won't work. Now get out of here."

Ellert furrowed his brow again, in that trick of brooding. "I came here for a million dollars. If I don't get it, I'm telling the police about LaNoue."

"What about LaNoue?"

"You had him copy five paintings in the National Museum. Two Velásquez, one Rembrandt, and oh hell, here's the list." Ellert tossed a slip of paper on the table and continued. "You had these copies substituted for the originals. You stole them, Morny. Half a million dollars' worth of paintings—and LaNoue's copies are in the National Museum right now. That's why I want my million."

"I—haven't got it."

"Sell your cottage, Tommy," Ellert suggested sarcastically.

"I'll pay you five thousand to get out. No more."

"Why don't you give me a nickel to run along and buy some candy? Talk sense."

Morny's eyes were gleaming again, and his voice was a hoarse whisper. "I'll destroy the paintings first!"

"Try it."

"I'll burn them and you won't get anything out of it!" Morny was walking, pantherlike with bent knees, across the room. "Not a cent. I'm offering you five thousand—cash."

"Listen, Morny. You're an old man—sixty or so. Always been coddled, always bought what you wanted. It's made you soft. I'm tough, and I've been on the wrong side of the law

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all my life." He had risen and was facing Morny now. "I know all the tricks, and you haven't a chance. Not even—"

Ellert laughed suddenly. His black eyes were holding Morny's flinty ones; his words were engaging all of Morny's attention. And while he spoke, Ellert's arm shot out suddenly, twisted and yanked. The gun flipped out of Morny's hand and landed on the carpet. Without another word, Ellert stooped and picked it up.

"Get the point?" he asked grimly.

"You're a jailbird!" snarled Morny. "You're afraid of the police, and I'm not. I'm Thomas Morny and they'll do what I say."

"No doubt. But when I've told my bit, they'll pinch both of us. I've been in jail before—you haven't. It isn't nice, but I can stand it better than you. Think it over, Morny. There's plenty of time. And meanwhile, you've got a guest."

Thomas Morny didn't answer. Once he could conceal the paintings, Ellert would have nothing on him. Ellert could talk all he wished; the police could learn from experts that the five paintings in the National Museum were frauds—it would do no good. Morny would have his stolen masterpieces safely hidden. Then he could dismiss the accusation as ridiculous. A man in his position would never be arrested without absolutely conclusive evidence.

"All right," he muttered, that dangerous, fanatic gleam in his eyes. "I'll think it over."

"I knew you'd see sense." Ellert glanced at the grandfather's clock in the corner. "It's late now and I'm tired. Show me my room."

Morny led the way upstairs in silence, down the broad corridor to the guest rooms, and opened the door.

"You can sleep here, Ellert. Goodnight."

"Not so fast, Morny. Let's go to your room."

"What for?"

Ellert laughed viciously. "So I can lock you up for the night. I wouldn't sleep well if I thought you were wandering around."

"Why would I—wander?"

"To dispose of the paintings, of course. Take them away. Then you could call in the police and they'd have nothing on you."

ELLERT entered the bedroom to examine the windows and door, then smiled brusquely. "Better call me Dick, as if we were old friends. I'll let you out in the morning, Tommy. Pleasant dreams."

Morny listened to the snap of the lock. He was a prisoner in his own home. And hidden under the same roof was evidence that would send him to jail for the rest of his life.

He paced up and down the carpet for the better part of an hour. If he could only get out! If he could only get out!

But his room was a two-story drop above a concrete driveway, and a man of sixty can't climb like a monkey. After a while he fretted himself into weariness, and went to bed—a beaten old man.

It was the same thing the second night, but Thomas Morny had been thinking all day. While he sat there brooding under the vigilant eye of Ellert, his mind was racing in circles. When one of the circles straightened out into a thought, his eyes, even in sunlight, gleamed like cats' eyes in the dark. But his expression was cast in the same patrician mask, and not even a grunt escaped him.

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He waited impatiently until nightfall and bed. Even while his pulses were racing with hope, he gave no sign. He kept acting the despondency he had felt most of the day.

But as soon as Ellert had locked him in, he seated himself at his small writing desk, dashed off a note and addressed it to his butler.

"Please have a duplicate key made for my bedroom door. *Mention nothing of this to anyone, least of all to me.* Put it in my top bureau drawer as soon as it has been made. I'll explain my reason in a few days. T. H. Morny."

In the morning, he slipped the note under his bed covers. The chambermaid would deliver it, and Morny could escape this same night.

There was nothing unusual about an unexpected guest at Rider's Rest, and if Morny was never out of Ellert's sight, it was quite natural. An old friend of his, Morny had explained. A man he hadn't seen in years. Ellert was to be given the run of the place. The small roadster was to be at his particular disposal. And if at any time he wanted one of the other cars, the chauffeur was instructed to comply.

The day passed slowly. The crafty, demented light showed oftener in Morny's eyes, and he spent long hours in absorbed silence, always under the watchful scrutiny of Ellert. Morny didn't even have the opportunity to speak to a servant away from Ellert.

Once, they made a tour of Morny's gallery. But Ellert, who a week ago had made a point of visiting the museum and studying the copies of the paintings LaNoue had made, saw none of the duplicates at Rider's Rest. That, however, was to be expected. Thomas Morny would hardly display $500,000 worth of pictures stolen from one of the best known galleries in the world.

"How'd you manage to pull it off?" asked Ellert, interested in this coup of a rank amateur cracksman.

"I found LaNoue making copies in the museum one day," answered Morny, anxious to brag after twenty years' silence. "They were the best I'd ever seen. LaNoue was a genius."

"And a fool. He could have gotten his million out of it, instead of me."

Morny laughed in that queer, fanatic way. "I hired him to make reproductions of the paintings I wanted. Frames and all, to every last detail. I was a director of the museum and I was cataloguing and classifying. That gave me the run of the place at night. I stayed late, got to know the guards."

Ellert nodded his approval. "Preparation—that's always the secret."

"I could see two of the galleries from the office where I worked. I used to tell the guard he could take time off for a cup of coffee.

"One day I brought in the finished copies and stacked them face against the wall of the store room, where no one would think of looking. On the night of the robbery, I brought LaNoue along and told the guard to go as usual. I arranged to have him detained so that I'd have a full hour's time. Then, while I watched in case of interruption, LaNoue made the change, frames and all, and when I went home I had the originals under my arm. Nobody even knew there'd been a theft."

"Where are they now?"

"Where you can't find them, Ellert."

"Bunk! If they were hidden that well, you'd have turned me over to the police long ago. The paintings are in the house, and if the cops really looked, they'd find them."

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"I was clever when I stole them, wasn't I? Well, I'm just as clever about hiding them."

"Have it your way, Morny. I've decided I want my money tomorrow."

"Tomorrow!"

"A million. Twelve o'clock tomorrow. And if I don't get it—"

III

MORNY'S thin mouth began to twitch. A moment later there was a rap on the door and the butler entered.

"Inspector Daniels, sir, to see you."

Morny's eyes shot fire. "Tell him to come in."

"Wait a minute," interrupted Ellert. "Tell him Mr. Morny's busy. He'll ring when he's ready."

The butler glanced from Ellert to his employer. But Morny had sunk back in his chair. "Do what Mr. Ellert says," he stuttered.

As soon as the door had shut, Ellert whipped a gun from his pocket. "See this?" he rapped out. "I'm going to stand behind that curtain, near the door. You try and leave the room with him, and you'll get the works."

"Suppose I turn you over?"

"That's okay. They take me, and they'll take you too. I just don't want you out of my sight, where you can pull a fast one and arrange to get rid of those pictures. Understand?"

Morny glanced at Ellert. He was vicious now, with his dark eyes beetled and threatening.

"Maybe Daniels is after me," went on Ellert. "You do what you want about talking. But try to leave this room—"

Ellert didn't repeat the threat. He merely turned and walked behind the heavy red portières.

When Inspector Daniels entered, Thomas Morny was alone in the room. "Hello, Inspector. Anything I can do for you?"

"Thanks." Daniels sat with his back to Ellert's curtain and helped himself to one of the cigars Morny offered. "I hear you have a guest with you. Where is he?"

"Probably somewhere on the grounds. Why?"

"I'd like to see him."

Morny's eyebrows raised in surprise. "A guest of mine? Police? I don't understand."

Daniels cleared his throat. "Joseph Emerson, who usually goes under an alias beginning with E, is around these parts and I had a tip he was coming here. One of the slickest confidence men going. I'd feel badly if he put anything over on you."

"Couldn't be Dick." Morny smiled and shook his head. "Dick's one of my oldest friends, Daniels. He came here for a few days' rest. The idea that he could be a confidence man—why, it's preposterous! I'd stake my fortune on him!"

Daniels rubbed his cheek. "You're sure it's the man you know? Not somebody with a letter of introduction?"

"Of course I'm sure! A friend of twenty years' standing!"

Daniels rose reluctantly. "I'd prefer to see him, Mr. Morny. Of course I'll take your word for it, but—"

"I wouldn't think of subjecting him to the indignity," interrupted Thomas Morny in his haughtiest manner.

Daniels shrugged, scratched his head, and added before going out, "If anyone shows up—a dark man, well built—here's his picture." The inspector fumbled in his wallet. "Emerson—Everett—something with an E.

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The name changes but not the face."

"Of course, of course." Morny ushered the police officer to the door. "If I see anyone like him. But Dick—the very idea!"

Ellert stepped from his curtain as soon as the door had shut. "Morny," he remarked, "you're all right. And something tells me you're going to come through tomorrow morning."

That night, Thomas Morny turned out his light as soon as Ellert had locked him in. In bare feet he rushed over to the bureau drawer, opened it and felt with his hand. The key!

He rubbed it slowly between his bony fingers, as a jewel expert might stroke a famous gem, as a miser might caress his gold. Thomas Morny at sixty, world known connoisseur and art collector, grinning his ancient head off at the surreptitious possession of a key to his own bedroom!

He went back to bed then, slipped the key under his pillow and waited. It was eleven-thirty. Ellert, dark, brusque, energetic looked like a man who would sleep soundly five minutes after his head had touched the pillow. But Morny was taking no chances.

He looked at his watch again at quarter of twelve, again at midnight, and every five or ten minutes for the next hour. Time dragged like an after-dinner speech.

At one o'clock Morny dressed. In his pockets he slipped his auto keys, a piece of stout cord and a pocket light. He grasped his shoes in his hands. It wouldn't do to make any noise.

He had a moment of panic as he approached the door. Suppose the other key had been left in the lock and he couldn't insert his! Suppose it didn't fit! But it slid noiselessly into the keyhole, turned with a slight click and the door was open.

On tiptoe he stepped the length of the corridor and down the heavily carpeted stairs. At the foot he paused, listening. Then he stalked towards his gallery, parted the double doors and drew a long breath.

HIS fingers were cold now, cold with fright, and they were awkward as they snapped on the flashlight. They fumbled clumsily at the reverse sides of the gilt frames. First the Matisse, then the Derain, and so on. Behind each one, he scratched and scraped for a little hook, then pried with his thumbnail and finally caught the little spring that released the backs. And one by one he opened them.

Each was the same. A heavily framed picture which he had bought honestly, and a false back that held one of his stolen masterpieces. He had to restrain himself now. He wanted to hold them to the light, to pore and gloat over them.

He contented himself with staring at the pictures just long enough to recognize them. They were all there. Five of them. They slid out of their hiding places easily. He would tie them together, tuck them under his arm and leave the house.

He might have to wake up the chauffeur—no more. No one else would know of his nocturnal adventure.

Morny began mumbling to himself as he worked at the fifth. This was the Correggio—that Madonna and saints for which he'd sell his soul to the devil—had sold it, in fact. It was the first masterpiece he had coveted.

He stepped back from the Correggio. For a moment Morny's heart fluttered and he thought he'd never survive another second. Then it set to beating again, great, scared thumps. Morny

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let out a little yell, but a hand slapped over his mouth and stifled it.

"I thought you'd get out of your room," rasped Ellert. "I've been up every night, waiting for the escape. Been watching you for the last five minutes."

Still Morny's heart was fluttering and pumping away.

"So this is how you hid them?" Ellert was laughing slowly. "You'd better get back to bed now. Cold down here for an old man—without shoes."

Morny said nothing. He didn't threaten, but his silence was a danger itself. "He's got me!" he kept saying to himself. "He's found the pictures—he's got me!"

"Come on—upstairs you go."

Morny held back, grabbing at the frame of a painting, swinging it far out from the wall in his frenzy.

"Drop it!" Ellert held his gun by the butt, and rapped Morny's knuckles. A gun!

"You know what'll happen if they find these here, don't you?"

Morny knew. But he couldn't for the life of him do anything about it. He could only think, "Ellert's found them! All my pictures!"

He glanced at Ellert, and something in Morny's blood-rimmed eyes, like red paint drawn around two glittering diamonds, made Ellert step back suddenly.

"You're nuts, Morny. Sane men don't look like—"

Morny's long, bony fingers weren't awkward any more, nor were they the weak fingers of an old man of sixty. They lashed out and somehow they landed on Ellert's trigger grip. Somehow the gun was pointing at Ellert's stomach, and those cold, crazy hands were squeezing with maniac's force.

There were five shots in all. Twice Ellert jerked back at little nauseous stabs in his stomach, and when he tried to lunge forward, he realized he was coughing blood and that strength wouldn't flow through his muscles.

But Ellert's power was desperate, and Morny's berserk surge had died out of him. And as the three other bullets left the gun, the muzzle was turning, turning in death's semicircle.

IV

THE papers next day carried news of the double killing. Thomas Morny, wealthy collector and art expert, and Joseph Emerson, alias Richard Ellert, had been found dead in the former's art gallery. Both had been killed by bullets from Ellert's revolver, for which the two had apparently been struggling.

George LaNoue, artist and copyist, read the account in the morning. But it wasn't until lunch time that he talked about it to a friend.

"Morny was a little crazy," he remarked. "Twenty years ago he had me copy some pieces in the National Museum, and then paid me five thousand dollars to substitute my copies for the originals. Thought he was getting away with a big fraud."

"Thought?"

"Naturally. You don't think I actually changed them, do you? Any expert could have told the difference, and I'd have landed in jail. So I left the originals on the walls of the museum and gave Morny my own copies. He never knew the difference."

LaNoue's friend laughed softly. "Ever tell that story to anybody?"

"Yes—parts of it, anyhow." LaNoue thought for a moment. "Dark, thick-set man, with a deep voice and black eyes. I can't seem to remember his name, except it began with E."

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Civil Service Q & A

By "G-2"

Could You Qualify as—

Police Patrolman	Special Agent (G-Man)
Police Detective	Secret Service Operative
Policewoman	Post Office Inspector
Fingerprint Expert	Customs Patrol
State Trooper	Immigration Patrol
Crime Prevention Investigator	Anti-Narcotic Agent
Probation Officer	Parole Investigator
Criminologist	Prison Keeper
Police Radio Expert	Internal Revenue Agent
	Alcohol Tax Agent

This department will give you every week typical questions asked in civil service examinations.

Bookkeeper's Test (Continued)

THE second section of the bookkeeper test which began in last week's issue is a continuation of the general education quiz. The questions as they appear here, together with instructions, are the identical questions asked in the actual examination given to more than 5,000 applicants. It is important to bear in mind the time limit fixed for both sections—one hour for both. If you made a record of the time you spent on the first section this should be added to the time required to answer the questions below. In the actual examination, the ringing of a bell denoted the beginning and the end of the one hour time limit. All test papers were collected at precisely the end of the hour. Unanswered questions were, of course, marked as misses.

The educational test is unusually long for a bookkeeper examination but civil service authorities explain that more and more attention is now given to general educational tests. Key answers to last week's test, and this week's, will be found at the conclusion of this test.

SECTION 2—General Education. Instructions; each group of five words which appears below contains two words which are the same or almost the same in meaning. Encircle, as your answer, the numbers of the two words in each group which most nearly have the same meaning.

EXAMPLE: (Q)—(1) boy; (2) giant; (3) youth; (4) lady; (5) dwarf. Answer: (1-3).

Q 41—(1) chew; (2) carve; (3) crack; (4) confuse; (5) cut.

Q 42—(1) affix; (2) attach; (3) tangle; (4) exceed; (5) cleave.

Q 43—(1) booth; (2) stall; (3) haven; (4) shoe; (5) corner.

Q 44—(1) tarry; (2) stay; (3) recur; (4) evolve; (5) swerve.

Q 45—(1) disposal; (2) essay; (3) endeavor; (4) desuetude; (5) refusal.

Q 46—(1) arrive; (2) depart; (3) fall; (4) run; (5) leave.

Q 47—(1) humiliate; (2) stain; (3) overshadow; (4) limp; (5) tarnish.

Q 48—(1) clean; (2) contentious; (3) sour; (4) immaculate; (5) submissive.

Q 49—(1) seize; (2) sicken; (3) flip; (4) tick; (5) flick.

Q 50—(1) decade; (2) instant; (3) fortnight; (4) day; (5) moment.

Q 51—(1) modesty; (2) sympathy; (3) pretension; (4) humility; (5) futility.

Q 52—(1) maintain; (2) refrain; (3) contain; (4) detain; (5) abstain.

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Q 53—(1) desert; (2) devastate; (3) forsake; (4) gather; (5) beg.

Q 54—(1) relate; (2) be; (3) exist; (4) possess; (5) extinguish.

Q 55—(1) cower; (2) cringe; (3) scowl; (4) shout; (5) cling.

Q 56—(1) injustice; (2) inheritance; (3) unfairness; (4) vengeance; (5) grievance.

Q 57—(1) indicate; (2) rant; (3) display; (4) jot; (5) exhibit.

Q 58 (1) symmetry; (2) identity; (3) oddity; (4) parity; (5) equality.

Q 59—(1) scoundrel; (2) soldier; (3) fool; (4) bailiwick; (5) blackguard.

Q 60—(1) pious; (2) demoted; (3) irreligious; (4) ceremonious; (5) devout.

Q 61—(1) supreme; (2) virtuous; (3) many; (4) finite; (5) good.

Q 62—(1) whole; (2) result; (3) part; (4) explosion; (5) upshot.

Q 63—(1) exclamation; (2) falsehood; (3) ejaculation; (4) oration; (5) statement.

Q 64—(1) pliant; (2) obstructive; (3) joint; (4) perplexed; (5) flexible.

Q 65—(1) dregs; (2) trappings; (3) media; (4) limbs; (5) fittings.

Q 66—(1) condescend; (2) meet; (3) burden; (4) deign; (5) grope.

Q 67—(1) deformity; (2) monstrous; (3) blemish; (4) fop; (5) squalid.

Q 68—(1) contrary; (2) akin; (3) last; (4) various; (5) divers.

Q 69—(1) disdain; (2) startle; (3) sarcasm; (4) scorn; (5) blame.

Q 70—(1) nasal; (2) loquacious; (3) talkative; (4) inarticulate; (5) phonetic.

Q 71—(1) guilty; (2) benignant; (3) irascible; (4) atrocious; (5) culpable.

Q 72—(1) vile; (2) sensuous; (3) fortuitous; (4) turbulent; (5) violent.

Q 73—(1) accord; (2) incursion; (3) discord; (4) concord; (5) resistance.

Q 74—(1) kind; (2) fertile; (3) listless; (4) sterile; (5) barren.

Q 75—(1) enfeebling; (2) drooping; (3) debilitating; (4) yielding; (5) touching.

Q 76—(1) sulphur; (2) brimstone; (3) hilt; (4) molasses; (5) mercury.

Q 77—(1) pusillanimity; (2) quality; (3) foresight; (4) intrepidity; (5) courage.

Q 78—(1) smell; (2) acidity; (3) tartness; (4) disease; (5) taste.

Q 79—(1) strike; (2) mediation; (3) employed; (4) arbitration; (5) phalanx.

Q 80—(1) domain; (2) adjunct; (3) fissure; (4) scope; (5) ravel.

Q 81—(1) truth; (2) veracity; (3) precision; (4) fallacy; (5) punctuality.

Q 82—(1) proscription; (2) top; (3) bottom; (4) ban; (5) medicine.

Q 83—(1) stoop; (2) bend; (3) stop; (4) orchestra; (5) building.

Q 84—(1) use; (2) employ; (3) fuse; (4) guard; (5) deploy.

Q 85—(1) droll; (2) sublime; (3) dandy; (4) funny; (5) courtly.

Q 86—(1) average; (2) mean; (3) method; (4) synonym; (5) gradation.

Q 87—(1) ill; (2) diaphanous; (3) ungrateful; (4) filmy; (5) profane.

Q 88—(1) figment; (2) device; (3) fiction; (4) fruit; (5) mistake.

Q 89—(1) livelong; (2) abrupt; (3) evanescent; (4) perennial; (5) fleeting.

Q 90—(1) people; (2) jacket; (3) coterie; (4) clique; (5) mob.

Q 91—(1) associate; (2) divide; (3) dulcify; (4) span; (5) sweeten.

Q 92—(1) mar; (2) demur; (3) bedevil; (4) hesitate; (5) curtail.

Q 93—(1) adventitious; (2) objective; (3) accidental; (4) nominal; (5) bold.

Q 94—(1) republicanism; (2) canard; (3) sophistry; (4) helotism; (5) slavery.

Q 95—(1) superfluous; (2) heterogeneous; (3) premature; (4) motley; (5) infrequent.

Q 96—(1) mixture; (2) turbulence; (3) contents; (4) tumult; (5) arbor.

Q 97—(1) lisp; (2) submit; (3) crepitate; (4) lessen; (5) crackle.

Q 98—(1) shielding; (2) fulgent; (3) redundant; (4) eschewing; (5) shining.

Q 99—(1) begin; (2) termite; (3) insect; (4) terminate; (5) before.

Q 100—(1) amusement; (2) diversion; (3) aversion; (4) avarice; (5) contention.

Now put down the time taken to complete the first and second sections, hours ....., minutes ....., seconds ..... The test on bookkeeping duties, which will appear next week, must also be completed within a time limit.

Key answers to first and second sections of general education test: Q 26—(2—8); Q 27—(2—7); Q 28—(2—5); Q 29—(1—5); Q 30—(2—6); Q 31—(1—7); Q 32—(3—6); Q 33—(1—8); Q 34—

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(3—5); Q 35—(1—8); Q 36—(2—7); Q 37—(1—7); Q 38—(4—6); Q 39—(4—8); Q 40—(3—7).

Second section: Q 41—(2—5); Q 42—(1—2); Q 43—(1—2); Q 44—(1—2); Q 45—(2—3); Q 46—(2—5); Q 47—(2—5); Q 48—(1—4); Q 49—(3—5); Q 50—(2—5); Q 51—(1—4); Q 52—(2—5); Q 53—(1—3); Q 54—(2—3); Q 55—(1—2); Q 56—(1—3); Q 57—(3—5); Q 58—(4—5); Q 59—(1—5); Q 60—(1—5); Q 61—(2—5); Q 62—(2—5); Q 63—(1—3); Q 64—(1—5); Q 65—(2—5); Q 66—(1—4); Q 67—(1—3); Q 68—(4—5); Q 69—(1—4); Q 70—(2—3); Q 71—(1—5); Q 72—(4—5); Q 73—(1—4); Q 74—(4—5); Q 75—(1—3); Q 76—(1—2); Q 77—(4—5); Q 78—(2—3); Q 79—(2—4); Q 80—(1—4); Q 81—(1—2); Q 82—(1—4); Q 83—(1—2); Q 84—(1—2); Q 85—(1—4); Q 86—(1—2); Q 87—(2—4); Q 88—(1—3); Q 89—(3—5); Q 90—(3—4); Q 91—(3—5); Q 92—(2—4); Q 93—(1—3); Q 94—(4—5); Q 95—(2—4); Q 96—(2—4); Q 97—(3—5); Q 98—(2—5); Q 99—(2—3); Q 100—(1—2).

ELECTRICIAN TEST

Judged by the number of requests received from readers in six different cities, quite a few civil service tests for the positon of electrician are pending. The technical section of this type of test usually follows a standardized pattern of which the following, given late in 1935, is a sample.

Q 1—Draw a simple diagram showing the circuit of a series-wound motor; also of a shunt-wound motor and of a compound-wound motor.

Q 2—Name three different methods of converting alternate current into direct current.

Q 3—(a) In taking a large transformer off the line which is opened first, the isolating disconnects or the oil circuit breaker? (b) Could a 25 cycle single phase transformer be safely connected to a 60 cycle single phase line? Give reasons.

Q 4—How would you protect yourself and the system if you had to make a tap for emergency series lighting to a live 600 volt third rail of an operating railroad?

Q 5—Show the circuit of a two-pole fused knife switch connected to a load.

Q 6—What is an auto transformer? Show a simple diagram of its connections.

Q 7—What is a volt, an ampere, a watt, an ohm? How many watts are in a horsepower? How many in a kilowatt?

Q 8—How would you change the connections to a three-phase motor in order to reverse its rotation?

Q 9—What will happen if a properly fused three-phase motor blows a fuse while running?

Q 10—If the primary of a step-down transformer has 2,300 turns and the secondary 230 turns, what voltage will be across the secondary terminals when 2,300 volts is applied across the primary?

Q 11—(a) Show how a 120-volt storage battery should be connected to charge it from a 110-volt circuit. (b) When charging a storage battery what terminal of the charger is connected to the plus terminal of the battery?

Q 12—How would you join the end of two conduits, in the field, neither of which can be turned?

Q 13—(a) what is the permissible current carrying capacity of No. 14? (b) How many No. 12 wires can be pulled in a one-half inch conduit?

Q 14—Give two causes for excessive commutator sparking, and state briefly how you would correct this in each case.

Q 15—What metals are generally classified as magnetic?

Q 16—The north pole of a compass is repelled by what pole of a magnet?

Q 17—How is a low-power circuit protected against overload?

Q 18—How is a high power circuit protected against overload?

Q 19—Would a 30-amp fuse be suitable for a circuit taking 28 amps? Give reason.

Q 20—How does the power in a circuit vary with the current?

Q 21—How does the resistance of a wire vary with its area?

Q 22—What is the sharpest bend you would give a lead-covered cable when installing it?

Q 23—What is the chief advantage in using high tension alternating current for power transmission over long distances?

(*Continued on Page 143*)

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They're Swindling You!

Stock Sharping

By

Frank Wrentmore

This is the sixtieth of a series of articles exposing business rackets that cost you billions of dollars every year! Mr. Wrentmore is an authority on swindles and frauds, well known to legal, financial and commercial associations.—The Editor.

THE fact that crooked lawyers are allied with the predatory high-pressure stock salesmen is emphasized by recent developments. I have repeatedly stated that many of the boys who sold phony stock in the United States have emigrated to Canada and have set up their "boiler rooms" in cities just across the border from whence they telephone their former customers and flood the country with their—just now—gold mining stock.

Quite naturally, Canadian authorities resent this invasion and are co-operating with American officials in an effort to prevent the fleecing of citizens of both countries. Familiarity with the practices of these racketeers has resulted in the enactment of protective laws in the Dominion designed to give the purchaser of Canadian stocks a run for his money. It is necessary to review briefly the former routine of some stock racketeers in order to acquaint you with a brand new evasion of Canadian law.

In the old days stock promoters would form a mining company with a capitalization of, say, 100,000 shares of common stock and 50,000 shares of preferred. 50,000 shares of the common and 25,000 shares of the preferred would be solemnly transferred to the promoters by a dummy board of directors in payment for the mining property which the promoters had previously bought for a song. The balance of the stock, (50,000 common and 25,000 preferred) would remain in the treasury of the company—and that was all there was in the treasury, no money at all.

Then the hullabaloo would commence. The promoters would draw up a prospectus which would have been a credit to the author of the Baron Munchausen yarns. They would open up their "boiler room" full blast. The stock dynamiters would get busy and unload all the *promoters'* stock on the dear old gullible public. None of that money, of course, ever found its way into the treasury of the company. Oh no, that was the *promoters'* stock, and

"I am glad to endorse the program of *Detective Fiction Weekly* which will bring to its readers the truth about rackets and racketeers. No man can be swindled if he knows in advance what the swindler is going to do—and nobody *wants* to be swindled."—Edward L. Greene, General Manager of the National Better Business Bureau.

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the treasury of the company was still devoid of cash.

Too frequently no sincere effort was ever made to sell the treasury stock. The promoters had made their pile through the sale of their own certificates, the public was holding the bag, so why worry? That was the old time stock fraud.

With this practice in mind, Canada passed legislation which required that the *treasury stock* must be sold to the public first and in this manner the company would be provided with working capital and could start actual mining operations. That money *must* go in the treasury, not to the promoters.

THE promoters didn't like this because it meant that *they,* not the public, would be holding the bag if the mine was not productive, so with the help of their shyster lawyers, here is what they are doing.

They still divide the stock issue as they formerly did, 50,000 common and 25,000 preferred to themselves in payment for the property, and the same amount of stock remains in the treasury of the company.

Their own stock is converted into units, each unit consisting of two shares of common stock and one of preferred, and these units are then placed in escrow in a bank. The bank, under the escrow agreement, holds the stock but issues receipts for the 25,000 escrowed units to the promoters. These receipts call for the delivery of the actual stock at some future date—generally after the treasury stock has been sold--and the promoters then sell these receipts, which are also called interim certificates, to the public.

Legally, they are quite within their rights. They have obeyed the letter of the law which forbids them to sell their stock to the public. If any investigations are made, they can refer the investigators to the bank, which, in turn, can show that the promoters' stock is intact in their vaults. Very little can be done with a set-up like that.

In this simple way the promoters of phony mines still get the public's money, but I am sure that no stock promoter was smart enough to think of this legal evasion.

The warning to *you* is *not* to buy interim certificates, voting trust certificates nor any interest in escrowed stocks without the most careful investigation.

It is true, of course, that in some instances there are good and valid reasons for placing stock in escrow and issuing interim certificates but the fact that this plan is being widely used for the purpose of disposing of fake stocks is sufficient reason for you to obey the old injunction to "Stop, Look, and Listen."

I don't want to leave you with the idea that this is the *only* method of disposing of fake stocks, or that all of them originate in Canada. Despite the fact that the Securities and Exchange Commission has been successful to a great degree in curtailing the sale of fake stocks which have their origin in the United States, Uncle Sam cannot protect you against *yourself.*

If you want to obtain information about stocks, there are plenty of reliable sources. You can go to your bank, the Blue Sky or Securities Commission of your state, the Better Business Bureaus. Or, if you wish, I will be glad to obtain and send you the facts. Investigate *before* you invest.

Next Week—The Wrong Customer

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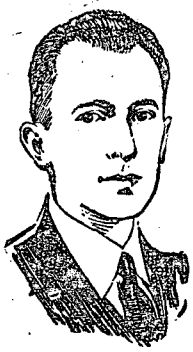
Solving Cipher Secrets

A cipher is secret writing. The way to solve ciphers is to experiment with substitute letters until real words begin to appear. In solving, notice the frequency of certain letters. For instance, the letters e, t, a, o, n, i, are the most used in our language. So if the puzzle maker has used X to represent e, X will probably appear very frequently. Combinations of letters will also give you clues. Thus, the affixes -ing, -ion, -ally are frequent. Read the helpful hints at the beginning of this department each week. The first cryptogram each week is the easiest.



M. E. OHAVER
"Sunyam"

EVERY one of the ninety pairs of numbers in Arrowhead's special cipher No. X-30, given below, begins with *1* or *2*. Hence the title! Cryptofans who have been asking for other types of ciphers to wrestle with will find something to their liking in this new sample of the cryptic art! Solutions to No. X-30 will not count in your monthly solving scores, but they will be counted in your total scores toward °*Inner Circle Club* membership. Send us your solutions! The answer and full explanation to No. X-30 will appear in two weeks.

No. X-30. The One-Two Cipher. By Arrowhead.

1-2 1-5 1-8 2-4 1-3 1-9 2-13 2-9 2-7 1-6
1-11 1-5 1-7 1-4 2-13 1-2 2-10 1-6 1-10 1-5
1-11 1-1 1-10 1-3 2-9 2-13 1-8 1-3 1-9 2-9
1-5 2-9 1-10 1-3 1-7 1-2 2-12 2-13 1-5 2-6
1-8 1-9 2-7 1-11 1-3 2-9 2-13 2-7 2-1 2-9
1-3 1-9 1-11 1-1 1-10 1-5 2-7 1-7 2-13 1-1
1-7 2-2 2-13 2-2 1-3 1-11 1-3 1-6 2-7 1-8
2-9 2-13 1-1 1-7 1-1 1-6 2-12 1-10 1-5 1-2
1-1 1-6 2-13 1-1 2-1 1-5 1-6 1-5 1-10 2-12.

In Hoodwink's No. 282, last week's Inner Circle cipher, the reversed terminals VO- and -OV could be interpreted as *de-* and *-ed,* upon duly noting frequencies, etc. Next, with symbol N marked as a vowel, NLON (*--e-*) could be tried as *area,* unlocking FBVOL (*--der*) as *under,* VOXNC-RNROV (*de-a--a-ed*) as *devastated,* etc. Another vulnerable spot in this crptogram was the initial group ROLLOWAY (*terrific*), which permitted tentative identification through its pattern.

Piscator starts off this week's cryptic spread with something unusual in a division puzzle! Please note the trippled letters in all three of the products! For an entering wedge, the multiplication Y × E = Y will help with symbol E. A comparison of the short words YPTKT and YPT will start you in Vedette's cryptogram. ZKT and QZYYTK will then follow. And so to SFK, SFKHTK, and SFBK; TUNYFK, ZGU, and NG; etc.

Jackdaw provides OUY and UY for entry to his contribution. LUY, UVL, VE, and OUYE, also FE and LF, will follow, with UPLAHEK and HEK then leading to FAXYNOYK, KYHS-CPOY, and the rest. You might well consider FRZF following the quotation in Roly-Poly's message. The starred groups *OGETLFL and *OGRHDEL *OGRT should then readily drop into place, together with ET, OETLUR, and FRYROEBVF.

There are some interesting patterns for your consideration in Ariana's catalogic crypt, for example, NARRPP and NTPPFP. And this construction should put you in good shape to attack °Edward J. Drumn's alliterative Inner Circle cipher. No. 288 carries a par of 175 solutions! How many will solve it? Send in your answers, cryptofans! By the way, Scorpio's "Monophagous Monographer," No. 210 of Aug 29, challenging 150 solutions, brought 184 answers across the firing line! Answers to current puzzles Nos. 283-88, inclusive, will be given next week. Asterisks in cryptograms indicate capitalization.

No. 283—Cryptic Division. By Piscator.

```
HRPRY)AYEMAHPY(HSE
  AAACCC
  ------
   HDDSAP
   HHHEEE
   ------
    CCCYYY
    CCCYYY
    ------
```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No. 284—Economical Innovation. By Vedette.

YF ECTTU BC VFHCFENYNFG, *YTRZE TUNYFK EBXEYN-YBYTE "*HKHE" (GF CTKNFU) SFK "*HK. ZGU *HKE." YPTKT ZKT SFBK QNGFYDCT MTDE YF CKTEE NG YPT SFKHTK, YATQOT NG YPT QZYYTK.

No. 285—Digital Discourse. By Jackdaw.

UPLAHEK OHBZYK VE UVL LBYYG. RVSY FAXYNOYK. LF UY RUVLGYDYK VE UVL LBYYG. LOVBB LUY FAXY-NOYK. OUYE UY OHBZYK FE UVL SVETYDL VE OUY KYHS-CPOY HBGUHAYO. HEK GYHNY DYVTEYK.

No. 286—Spectacular Act. By Roly-Poly.

"ABBDEFG HBBFKLH NGB FKEOP GLRS ET DRNT UBNLH LTS VX ET FKLN," FRZF *OGRHDEL *OGRT, FRYROEBVF *OGETLFL OETLUR FVXLH-FDLVKG.

No. 287—A Fireside Affair. By Ariana.

TAYP-FGKXP *GTLZVFSUJUZS OUZZPE: AKFGPE FAHB, EALFG GHEVPK, NELZMPEEK FLHNP, YLFTPO BAGLGAPF, REPFT NPXPEK GUBF, REHUG FLXLO, *EADHPRAEG NT-PPFP, TAG BHYBVUZ BUP, NARRPP.

No. 288—Much Put Out. By °Edward J. Drumn.

AEXOPB AGHKDXRZ AGHXBL AEXVO ARXSTD; AGOPKZ ABS. AXSFO ABBDOXV ATNBLP AGOBDZ AGDVO ASPXZT. ABSP—ASP ARRYX ANNZ.

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS

277—Key:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
H	E	A	V	Y	G	I	R	L	S

278—"Now Autumn's fire burns slowly along the woods, and day by day the dead leaves fall and melt, and night by night the monitory blast wails in the key-hole."—Allingham.

279—Five-dollar story: A bum hit a traveling man for a dollar. "You sure have a nerve to ask for so much." "Well, you see, I'm putting all my 'begs' in one 'ask it.'"

280—Playful mice enter dugout canoe; eat holes through bottom, sinking craft. Rodents then swim ashore to safety.

281—Luxuriant-maned *maestro*, minus vandyke, perturbs pianist playing concerto. Artist, miscalculating arpeggio, produces cacophonic progression. Perspires profusely.

282—Terrific storm, coincident with autumnal equinox, swept Gulf coast. Devastated area under martial law.

Readers submitting answers to one or more of the current puzzles Nos. 283-88 will be duly credited in our *Cipher Solvers' Club* for November. Address: M. E. Ohaver, Detective Fiction Weekly, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

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FLASHES from READERS

FRED MACISAAC, long a favorite of the readers of this magazine, begins his latest, thrilling novel in this issue. "The Mogul Murders," we think, is the most exciting story Mr. MacIsaac has ever written.

We believe that no reader will wish to risk missing an installment of this fine account of murder and intrigue in the Underworld, and we suggest that you reserve the next four issues of the magazine at your newsdealer's so that you will be sure to avoid disappointment.

This reader has a very serious problem, indeed, as anyone can see!

DEAR EDITOR:

Whattamigonnado? What am I going to do? I'm a five-foot-six member of a six-foot family, woe is me. I'm the youngest of six brothers, alackaday!

At first, I was the only member of the family addicted to DFW. Every Wednesday, like a good customer, I trotted out to the news-stand and plunked down my dime and carted DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY home with me. It was idyllic.

And then Jerry, my oldest brother, picked up an old copy a couple of months ago, and got himself all enthused in the serial. Every Wednesday after that, when I came through the door, he'd take it away from me. That meant I couldn't get around to it until Thursday at the earliest.

Well, I'm not a big pig, and he's my brother and all that, so I wasn't too worried about it. But about a week later, instead of giving the mag back to me, he turned it over to Tom, lauding a certain short story. I guess you know what happened then. I got shoved off until Friday.

When Dick took to reading the magazine, that made it twice as bad, because, just between the two of us, Dick is a little thick, and it takes him twice as long to read anything as it does a normal human. The upshot was that I had to wait until the following Monday to do my reading.

Harry thought it must be pretty swell stuff if a dumb-bell like Dick would get excited about it. He signed up for the next whack at it, and as if that weren't bad enough, he decided to become a cryptofan and I had to wait till Wednesday to get the book.

That's my problem, Mr. Editor. I buy the magazine on Wednesday and it isn't until I've bought the next one that those big stiffs will let me read it.

And that isn't the end of it, either. Bert, who hasn't got the bug yet, is beginning to go around the house with that deadly DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY gleam in his eye. I know as sure as shooting what that means. He's going to get into the line, too, and that will shove me off to Thursday, a week and a day after the date of publication.

Now I know, of course, that you folks will contend that there is a very simple solution to a problem of this kind. You'll say I ought to go and buy six copies of the mag.

Well, that would be fine and dandy if I could shell out sixty cents a week and still eat. But I'm making twelve bucks as a grocery clerk, and I'm always behind the financial eight-ball.

Maybe you'll say I ought to make those overgrown tramps buy their own copies each week. Well, Mr. Editor, that's just what I want to ask you about. Have you got any pull with the police commissioner? Are you big enough to convince about a thousand pounds of Scotsmen that they ought to dig into the old sock for their own copies? No? I thought so! So will you please

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quote the club rate for six subscriptions of DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY, all to go to the same guy?

MARK BURLEY,
Kansas City, Mo.

Probably Mr. Penrod T. Field merely feels that old.

DEAR SIR:

Just read a letter signed Penrod T. Field, in the October 24 issue of FLASHES FROM READERS. It has me puzzled. I know how old I am, I know I've been reading FLYNN'S (that is DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY—it's still FLYNN'S to me) since the first copy published. At that time a sample copy was sent to me. Now either Mr. Field learned to read at a rather advanced age or my memory fails me.

So will you tell me when our magazine was first published?

I have never missed a copy since the first sample I received. I came close to losing out in August of 1935, though. I was in Petaluma, California. I had taken the current copy with me on a short trip, along with several other books. I suspicion the maid at the hotel became interested in a yarn and thought I was through with the magazine. Anyhow, it disappeared from my room. Couldn't find another copy anywhere in town. It took a local agency three weeks to locate another copy for me.

While I like serials, any number, I don't care how many you run at one time so long as you continue to mix up the stories so one gets variety each week.

I enjoy all your features, although I'll admit I've never been able to work out a cryptogram yet, but I still try when I get the time. Shortly after Wrentmore's article about punchboards, one of our local "outside-the-limits" service stations was hooked exactly as the article described.

While I realize the "ads" at the ends of stories are one of the reasons we get so much for our ten cents, I hope they will never squeeze out entirely those meaty little articles you use for page fillers.

Sincerely thanking you for my years of entertainment and best wishes to you.

An ardent DFW fan,
MRS. J. C. JORDAN,
Napa, California.

A message from a two-novelette man.

DEAR SIR:

I have noticed in recent issues that you have inaugurated a slight innovation in the magazine—publishing two long novelettes in each issue.

I think that this is a splendid idea. The October 24 issue, which I have just finished reading, is a good example of what I mean. "Prison Bait," the first novelette, by Leslie T. White, was a crackerjack of a yarn, and the Paul Ernst story, "The Shadow of the Chair," was another.

I think that Max Brand's newest serial, "Seven Faces," holds a lot of promise as an intriguing, fast-paced tale, also, and I'm already tied into knots in it.

And then there were the short stories. You really give the readers too much for their money (although I hope you will go on doing it) because by the time I get to the shorts, I've already had my ten cents' worth of fun.

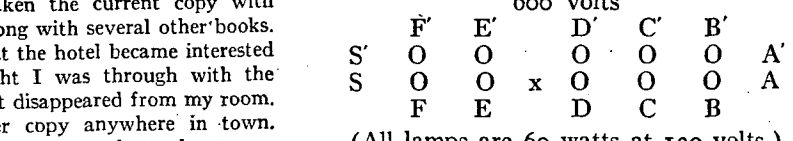
Yours till the cows come home,
DOUGLAS RUTHERFORD,
Duluth, Minnesota.

Civil Service Q & A

(*Continued from Page 137*)

Q 24—Sketch the circuit for controlling a hall light from upstairs and from downstairs (three way circuit.)

Q 25—



(All lamps are 60 watts at 120 volts.)

Referring to the above sketch, what would happen with respect to the brilliance of the lamps if a jumper were placed from E-D to E′-D′ after a break occurs between lamps E and D, all as indicated?

Limitations of space will not permit publication of key answers. The electrically-minded reader would do well to bear in mind that in an actual test all answers should be brief—the briefer the better. Unnecessarily long answers invariably are penalized by Civil Service examiners. The minimum mark required to pass the above test was 75. Although 1030 applicants filed for the test, the number who actually took the test dwindled to 750. Possibly this falling away indicates that a test for electrician is something for which the applicant should be well prepared. Certainly there is nothing in the 25 questions given above that could be answered with a guess. Applicants should bear this in mind: don't attempt to write a book for your answer. The longer the answer the lower your mark.

Next Week — Bookkeeping Duties and Criminal Identification Expert

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COMING NEXT WEEK!

Invention for Murder

By WILLIAM EDWARD HAYES

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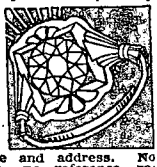

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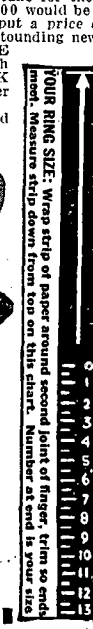
YOUR RING SIZE: Wrap strip of paper around second joint of finger, trim so ends meet. Measure strip down from top on this chart. Number at end is your size
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13

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